# SHORT STORIES

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No. 736.] Week ending February 7, 1903. [Price One Penny.

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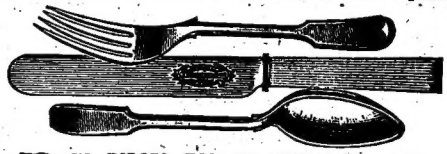

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SPLENDID SERIAL STORY STARTS SHORTLY.

# Short Stories.

No. 736.] For the Week Ending February 7th, 1903. [ONE PENNY.

## The Chronicles o' Glencrackit.

BY G. VINCENT-HOLYTOWN.

### MacPherson the Diplomatist.

"So ye're determined tae gang Sooth, but at the same time ye want me to advise ye tae dae it, like."

In seemingly-abstracted fashion did the canny Andrew MacPherson address this acid remark to his nephew, Norval Menzies, a strapping youngster of twenty-two.

The younger man did not relish the insinuation, and his ruddy complexion flushed a deeper red as he replied:

"Not at all, uncle, you have taken me up wrongly. I have determined to go South and make my way in the world. I asked for no advice as to whether I should go or stay, but simply told you as a matter of respect, that I was going. Would you have me rush off without giving you some warning?"

"Ye w'u'd hardly dae that, I'm thinking," was Andrew MacPherson's ruminative reply, made with impassive face.

Harmless as the words might appear, they cloaked another stab for young Menzies.

"I shall not ask you for a penny," he flared up, "if that's what you mean."

Norval was a poor match for the elder man in any bout of words. Twice already during the interview had he lost his temper through his uncle's apparently careless remarks, which had really been designed for this very purpose. The advantage of course fell to Mr. MacPherson, who looked up in bewildered deprecation of his nephew's outburst.

"Did I say ye w'u'd?" he queried mildly, continuing. "Look here, Norval, ye'll no' need tae ask for siller tae stairt yo in life, for I'll gie ye what's necessary without asking."

"Oh, uncle Andrew, you are too kind, but I couldn't think——"

"Nae mair could your puir mither, ma man. A thochtless, freevolous lass she was, wi' nae mair sense in her heid than tae mairry a man like Menzies."

"He was my father," burst in Norval, with flashing eye.

"There's nae gainsaying that," resumed Mr. MacPherson composedly, "ye're as like him in your folly as could be. He was aye rushin' ram-stam intae a' mainner o' trouble, heedless o' advice, and he w'u'd aye scatter what little siller he had without ony thocht for the morrow."

"And yet everybody liked him!"

"Oh, ay, everybody liked him for that very reason, he lavished his substance amang them. I'm pleased tae think I can dispense wi' that spurious kin' o' popularity. I could lectur' ye for hours on the fuilish, extravagant things your puir faither and mither did when they were alive——"

"Had they no redeeming features, uncle?"

"They had, Norval, though they w'u'dna heed ma advice, they could at least listen tae it without interruption."

Norval felt deservedly rebuked, and allowed his uncle to finish without further comment.

"Aye, ma man, ye'll need siller tae stairt ye in London. Ye can prey upon the Soothron tae your he'rt's content, for he expects ye tae dae it and raither likes it. But ye'll ha'e tae dae it in a frock-coat and a silk hat, and tha'e braw things cost bawbees. Ye understaun' that rig-oot constitutes the naitional garb o' an Englishman, and he tak's it as a personal compliment when ye wear it, for he believes ye've been brocht up tae wear naithing but kilts in Scotland. Moreover, Norval, ye'll ha'e tae drop your pronoonced Scottish accent and speak the English language in a' its purity, the same as mysel'. When I was in London last, a man in a shop there (wha was selling me some guids at the time) assured me that unless I'd tell't him I was Scottish he w'u'd never ha'e guessed it. And noo, Norval, tae conclude, whenever ye're ready tae stairt for London, I'm ready tae stairt ye."

"I don't know how to thank you enough, uncle, I'm sure," began Norval, with glistening eye, but Mr. MacPherson closured him immediately.

"Dinna try then," he broke in huskily, "I promised your puir faither on his death-bed that I'd mak' a man o' ye, and I will. Aye, he was a fine man, was Menzies, I hope ye'll be like him in everything."

Andrew MacPherson's words might occasionally be inconsistent but not so his acts.

* * * * *

Long after young Menzies had left the room, Andrew MacPherson sat still, pondering sadly over his impending loneliness.

A bachelor, he found himself in the full prime of life, absolutely without relatives other than his young nephew. Upon him he lavished in his own curious, dogmatic way, the affection he had bestowed upon his only sister, Mrs. Menzies, and her husband, in their lifetime, unhappily cut short by a deadly epidemic. And now the young man was leaving him, as after all was to be expected, to push his way in the world. Andrew MacPherson had often thought of marrying, but the near departure of Norval decided it, and for Andrew MacPherson to make a decision meant immediate action.

He had always been on terms of the most friendly intimacy with the Misses Leslie, aunt and niece, who lived on the next farm. Possessing a warm liking for them both, he had never yet made up his mind which to admire the more.

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At one time the younger lady's winning ways and gentle loveliness would attract most of his attention, while at another the sound common-sense and business ability of her aunt, who was not much more than a decade her senior, would extort his deeper admiration.

At this particular phase of his mind, however, the sentimental very naturally prevailed over the practical, and he accordingly determined to approach Marion Leslie with a proposal of marriage in preference to her Aunt Helen.

That very evening he proceeded to put his fortune to the test, by calling on the young lady in question.

Awkwardly enough, he could not, of course, be aware, that his nephew had forestalled him the previous day. Indeed, out of Norval's proposal to and acceptance by Marion Leslie, had arisen his sudden impulse to rush South and fight the world on her behalf. He had not told her of his design, having (with the brilliant suddenness inherited from his father), only thought it up that morning. As we have seen, too, he did not find, or take, an opportunity of explaining to his uncle, the reason of his determination to go South.

Out of this combination of circumstances, therefore, a very delicate situation was bound to be brewing.

"Come in, Mr. MacPherson," was his smiling welcome by the young lady herself, who opened the door to him; "Aunt Helen will be in presently."

"Weel, Marion," commenced Andrew deliberately; "I dinna ken if your Aunt Helen's presence is an absolute necessity, on this occasion, I raither think no'. The fact is, that I've come tae see ye in consequence o' an interview I had wi' Norval Menzies this forenoon."

Marion flushed and toyed uneasily with her crochet-needle.

"Then he has told you!" she said, in a voice that strove not to be tremulous.

"Of coorse he has, wha' else should he tell it tae if no' tae his mither's brither?" inquired Andrew MacPherson in a tone of challenge.

"Indeed, as you say, Mr. MacPherson, to whom else?" rejoined Marion, a little more confidently; "Norval is always straightforward."

"Like his faither afore him, Marion," said MacPherson proudly; "Menzies w'u'd n'ither tell nor act a lee tae save life or siller. Efter his maist fuilish speculations he w'u'd aye come and tell me the ungarnished truth. I aye liked Menzies. . . . Weel, ye can imagine that this means a big cheenge in ma life——"

"But not to take place for a long time yet——"

"Immediately, Marion, accordin' tae the idea he conveyed tae me. He's just like Menzies, his faither, let him tak' a thing intae his heid and it's got tae be done on the spot."

"He is impetuous, I know," murmured Marion; "but such urgency in the matter must have rested entirely on your permission."

"In that connection, Marion, I intimated tae him in the plainest o' words that whenever he's ready tae stairt, I'm ready tae stairt him, and if he's like his faither afore him, he's no' likely tae dally long."

"How good of you, Mr. MacPherson," stammered Marion, blushing profusely.

"Nonsense, I couldna dae less . . Noo, ye w'u'd hardly ha'e suspected, Marion, that a bachelor o' sae mony years standing, like masel', could regaird mairriage as a desirable thing——"

Marion's gaze dropped as he continued: "But the fac' remains, Marion, that I dae, and seeing that Norval's goin' tae leave me so soon, I've decided tae get mairried——" Marion's eyes were lifted to his face with a puzzled expression—"at once, and, as I've already hinted, I've called tae ask ye if ye'll dae me the honour tae become ma——"

"Stop, stop, Mr. MacPherson," broke in Marion in an anguish of shame; "there is some terrible misunderstanding. Norval—that is—I—I am—I am already——"

The poor girl could get no further with her words, nor would Andrew MacPherson permit her to try, stopping her attempt with a peremptory wave of the hand. A keen-witted man at all times he had instantly grasped the real circumstances.

Possessing diplomacy of no mean order, this knowledge enabled him to save the situation, spare her feelings, and retain his own dignity, even at this late stage of the interview.

"There's nae misunderstaunin' ava," he said, with assumed peevishness. "The main fault o' women-folk is that they canna listen tae the feenish o' what a man's got tae say. Ma words were these—and if ye dinna interrupt me I'll try tae mak' an end o' them—I've decided tae get mairried at once, and, as I've already hinted, I've called tae ask ye if ye'll dae me the honour tae become ma—deputy tae your Aunt Helen. I'm a bashful man and I thocht ye w'u'd dae it better than masel'."

Marion, dazed but willing, promptly agreed to the request, and Andrew MacPherson solemnly took his leave, repeating to her at parting—"There's nae misunderstaunin' ava. I'm prepared tae substantiate every word I said."

When Andrew MacPherson got home, the first sound that greeted his ears, was the melodious tenor voice of his nephew in full song:—

*Though I leave thee now in sorrow,*
*Joy may light our loves to-morrow,*
*Doomed to part, this faithful heart,*
*One gleam of joy from hope shall borrow.*

The singer was at his evening toilet, and, not having heard any one enter, he got a start when his uncle spoke, at the conclusion of his stanza:

"Ye're just like your faither, Norval. Menzies was aye happiest when he had eicht or nine assorted dooms, o' his ain making, hanging o'er his heid. I observe also that ye borrow your gleams o' joy frae the same source as your puir faither did. But wha, may I ask, doomed ye tae pairt, but yoursel'?"

Norval guessed from the quizzical look on his uncle's face that his love-secret was revealed, though how, he could not imagine.

"However do you manage to find things out as you do, Uncle Andrew?" he queried in nervous banter.

"Through the studied language o' diplomacy, ma lad," replied Mr. MacPherson cautiously. "And see here, Norval," he continued meaningly; "raither than leave onybody in sorrow, I think it w'u'd be better for a' concerned if ye w'u'd stay where ye are. If ye conteenue tae manage ma beesiness affairs as ye have done in the past, I can promise ye a salary commensurate wi' an early mairriage. In fac', I've conveyed the impression, tae the richt quarter, that ye're anxious tae be mairried and settled doon as soon as convenient, and that I've raither encooraged the idea——"

Andrew MacPherson broke off the subject, to open a note that was handed in for him, and Norval's outburst of gratitude was wasted on him for the time being, for the letter was of paramount importance:

"Dear Mr. Macpherson," *it ran;* "*Aunt Helen says she cannot recognise any deputy in the matter at issue, although she might favourably consider any reasonable proposal by the principal direct, yours sincerely,* Marion Leslie."

"I'll ha'e tae gang oot again, Norval," he said.

"Is it anything I can do for you, uncle?"

"No, Norval, ma man, this is a personal maitter that canna be done by proxy. I've tried that already withoot success."

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# A Tangled Love Skein.

## The Story of a Double Sacrifice.

"So you are sent out to be my successor here, eh?"

This was the greeting accorded to Harry Stenlake as he presented himself to a man who appeared to be anything between twenty-five and fifty—a man with a heavy moustache and beard, a complexion that made one hesitate to say that it was bronzed because there was a certain tinge of whiteness about it, and a young-old sort of look about his face. His frame ought to have had a suggestion of great strength, yet the new-comer, Harry Stenlake, could see that the man was weak.

"Yes, my name is Stenlake, and I am instructed by the firm in the Old Country to take up the duties while you have a rest before taking up a better appointment at home."

Stenlake spoke with a feeling of uneasiness; he had come out to Peru full of hope, but hope seemed to be oozing out of his finger tips. It almost appeared as if, in shaking hands with his predecessor, the hope that had been in him had passed out to James Thornton, and thus their respective sentiments had been altogether reversed.

Thornton eyed him curiously, and then invited him into the small wooden dwelling which he had facetiously called "Liberty Cottage."

It was a relief to get out of the broiling sun, and Stenlake heaved a sigh before partaking of the refreshments offered to him by his host.

They chatted about England for a while, the journey out, and kindred topics, afterwards turning to the question nearest the heart of Stenlake.

"The duties?" repeated Thornton. "Oh, I can't say that they are hard. You have a lot of natives to look after, and there are a fair number of people who are descendants of Spaniards and natives; we call them *mestizos*. There are good and bad among them, but you will get along without trouble if you study them a bit. Mining is the chief occupation, as you are aware, but the employees get various things from the forest trees—fruits, gum, and other articles, as well as several articles from the ground in the forest (miniature mining, I call that). We export a lot, sending it to the agent in Lima to the order of the firm. Well, you superintend all that. There isn't much knowledge of mining required to get the ore, because we have no costly machinery or up-to-date processes."

"So, on the whole, it is a pretty easy job?" queried Stenlake, with the intonation of a man who feels that he is asking a question to which he would like to receive an affirmative reply, but expects a negative.

Thornton gazed at him for nearly a minute without speaking.

"You have taken the job and I suppose you've got enough British pluck in you to stick at it and do your best, so I'll tell you how it stands. If I thought you were the sort of fellow that turned tail and left a man in the lurch, I wouldn't tell you. I'm glad that you've relieved me of my appointment."

Despite himself, a shiver ran through Stenlake's frame. He looked at the other man.

"You're strong, I should say," pursued Thornton slowly, "and you will want a strong constitution to stand these fevers and the climate generally. I was strong, but three years of it have broken me up, I fancy. Why did I come out? Well, why did *you*?"

"I tell you frankly," responded Harry Stenlake. "I didn't seem to get a chance of making headway at home. Luck has been against me for years. I had to relinquish my mining education because my father went smash and died, so I was prevented from taking a good berth and rising in the world. I jogged on from one thing to another, and I fell in love. But I hadn't much to offer, and we agreed to wait till I could get £200 a year. We have waited more than three years, and at last I thought that if I got a place like this, she might come out and marry me, and, later, we could go back and I should get a decent appointment. They are giving me £300 a year for this job, which I suppose is equal to £200 in London."

"I didn't come here to gain the woman I loved, but to get away from her!" laughed Thornton. But the laugh had no mirth in it. "But the difference is, no doubt, that the girl loves you, but the one I mean didn't love me, so it appeared!"

"I don't see how I can bring her here if——" began Stenlake.

"It would mean death to her!" interrupted Thornton decisively. "It is commonly supposed that you don't get yellow fever here, because it's too far inland; but you get a very good imitation, to say the least! Then there are other fevers and little 'ills' that man is heir too! However, perhaps you are better able to endure them than I, and it will lead to something better," he added, suddenly remembering that it was bad policy to scare a man. "It means a little extra waiting, that's all!"

That was Stenlake's introduction to his new sphere. During the next three days he was busy with Thornton, and he felt more buoyant. On the fourth day, Thornton took his departure, and Stenlake set his teeth and determined to do his best.

"It's all for her," he muttered, "and this may be the making of me! Thornton didn't seem much interested in my love affairs, for he never asked her name. Too eager to get away, of course. I wonder if he'll go to the girl who wouldn't have him when he gets home? Likely enough! It is strange what love will make you do!"

Harry Stenlake threw himself with ardour into the work of his new position, encouraged by the thought of Millie Darrell's sweet face and buoyed up by the hope that he would escape the evils to which Thornton had nearly succumbed. Hope, says the poet, springs eternal in the human

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breast, and Stenlake persuaded himself that there were reasons why he should succeed where his predecessor had failed.

"I am not so strong as he is or was," he would say to himself, "but, then, it is precisely the strong men who fall victims to these complaints of malaria and fever, because they don't take sufficient precautions."

Yellow fever and malaria seemed a long way off, but Stenlake soon learnt that he was not a great distance from the Amazon, and—well, some of the *mestizos* fell ill, and that was ominous.

He made himself master of the situation and soon became a favourite with those under him. There were only three Europeans among them; not exactly the sort of men whom he could accept as associates, and he was glad that they had habitations at a considerable distance from his own.

His household work was performed by a native woman, but at the end of a month she stated her intention of going back to her own village and he was forced to look about for another domestic servant. There was not much to be done, but that little must be done.

He sighed for the presence of Millie. It was not a particularly pleasant spot for her, so far from civilisation, yet he thought that they could be happy in each other's society, and in that alone. It was lonely for him, and he gradually began to have a gleam of understanding as to why some men did not take enough care of themselves. There was the temptation to drink, just to pass the time, and there was no difficulty in getting a strong drink, for the natives brewed it from certain forest products. Then the desire to walk about in order to escape the loneliness, the deadly monotony; he did it himself one night, plunging into the forest, and he returned shivering. He was wise enough to take warning. He had not brought much reading matter with him, and he longed for company.

His second domestic help was rather worse than the first, as a companion with whom to exchange a few words, and, lonely as he felt, he was usually not sorry to see her retire to her own hut.

The workers were better off than he, for they formed a village—rather a scattered one, perhaps, but they lived with their families and had neighbours. He could not associate with them; that would have meant loss of caste.

So four months passed. He had received two letters from Millie, and had just replied cheerily to the second. Yet he was not so cheerful nor so full of hope as he made out. The climate and the circumstances were affecting him.

His second help now left him and he was sorry, for he did not feel well; but he nearly jumped with delight when he saw before him a young native woman of about three-and-twenty and heard her ask, in a mixture of Spanish and a corruption of what had once been the language of the country, if he wanted a servant.

Yes, of course he wanted a servant, he told her. Did she want the situation? She did, and almost before he knew what he had done, and certainly without reflection, he had engaged her.

"Ivara," he called to her that same evening, "I have not seen you here before. Have you been at work on the estate?"

He had picked up the jumble of a lingo very well, and she understood him perfectly. She shook her head, and he fancied that the shadow of a look of disdain crossed her face. A beautiful face it was, and full of subdued dignity.

"Looks like a daughter of the Incas, the ancient Kings of Peru!" he mused, but his musing was interrupted by her reply.

"A woman of my lineage does not herd with such as they!" she replied proudly. "It would be better to die! I have wandered in search of work with those who are my equals, for I have to earn my bread, and it is hard to find suitable employment."

He was interested. He asked questions, and that evening passed more pleasantly than any since he had left England. Ivara claimed descent from the Incas, rightly or wrongly; Stenlake was inclined to say that she was right in that claim. She had told him very little, being reserved and dignified, but it was clear that she was pleased by the interest he displayed.

The time passed quite differently now; he was usually busy during the day, and in the evening he would find his tea-supper ready for him and Ivara ready to listen to the stories he told her of the island in the north of which everybody spoke so much. Sometimes she would unfold a little of the history of her own strange country, as it had come down to her by oral tradition, but she said very little of herself. She had grown up in an out-of-the-way place in the north; and Stenlake wondered whether there was some wealthy hidden city—some new Cuzco—up there.

Another two months passed, and then Harry had his first attack of fever; he had been fortunate to escape so long, if what Thornton had said was correct. On the evening of the day preceding his illness he had written to Millie Darrell, and had incidentally remarked that he did not feel very well, but it was merely a passing indisposition.

However, he had a fairly bad attack, and he came back to everyday work afterwards with a weakened frame and an uneasy mind. He had realised two things, namely, that it was not at all certain that he would be able to complete his three years, and—that Ivara loved him!

The two months of agreeable intercourse had not been without its effect on her, and he was conscious that he had abstained from mentioning Millie's name. During his illness he might have raved of her, but if so, Ivara had not understood or was hiding the knowledge within her own heart.

He had not made love to her, he told himself; he had never faltered in his loyalty to Millie, but he blamed himself for having engaged the services of Ivara, and for having availed himself of her companionship at those times when he did not require her help in the cottage. Yet it had been pleasant to pass the time, the long, dull hours, with someone of refinement and sense.

After the way in which she had attended to him during his attack he could not treat her otherwise than he had previously done; it would have been too bad to dismiss her to her own hut immediately on the conclusion of the meal to pass the time in solitude. That would have looked like ingratitude, and he was not ungrateful! So the old companionship was continued, and he defended his action by specious argument.

Ivara was not like a white woman; although refined—very refined for a native—she was but a native, and they were not capable of the finer feelings of the more cultured whites. What he had fancied to be love on her part was nothing more than the faithful devotion of an inferior; it was not love, for she would not dream for a moment that she could unite herself to one of the superior race.

"I am very glad that I decided not to alter the course of things," he remarked to himself at the close of a particularly pleasant evening. "In my weak condition a few days ago I fancied a lot of nonsense! There's no harm in enjoying a little society of a congenial kind till I can get out of this hole and get back to Millie!"

Harry Stenlake's recovery was very slow; his strength was a long time returning, and, although he went about his ordinary duties, he was conscious of a lack of strength and

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energy. It was this condition that made him take a perverted view of circumstances.

For nearly six weeks he struggled on, during which time he received a visit from the agent at Lima, who went away with a grave face. Then Stenlake was laid low by another attack of illness, and hovered between life and death for several days. Occasionally he had a lucid interval, and he saw Ivara waiting upon him. He shuddered and shut his eyes, vaguely wishing that the fever would take him, for he recognised only too well the look in her face.

It was love, all absorbing love! And once, only once, he detected an expression of jealousy or hate! He must have raved about Millie!

Then he must have had a relapse, for a long blank ensued. He regained consciousness one evening towards dusk, and his senses seemed to come back fully and all at once. He heard a voice, pitched in rather a high key; it was Ivara's. She was speaking English, which she had picked up by practice with him.

"I love him! He is mine! You no take him 'way! I have watch, tend him! I will not lose him!" Then followed a flow of language in her native tongue, showing that her feelings had so gained the mastery that it was impossible to confine herself to a little-known language—a strange tongue, in order to express them.

The words struck him, cutting him like a knife. She was talking to someone, surely. Had the agent sent someone to replace him so that he might return "unfit for service?"

"You no take him!" It was Ivara again, speaking in a lower tone, but with intense feeling, and again using the language that was strange to her. "You no take h m! No, no, no!"

Why was she speaking English? To the agent, or his messengers, she would speak the mixed language or Spanish. Then another voice fell on his ear, and he gasped, "Millie!"

"I do not understand. Mr. Stenlake is my betrothed husband, and I am to take him to England. It is very kind of you to wait on him, and you have earned our undying gratitude. We can never thank you sufficiently. But you are mistaken, Ivara!"

The words were uttered softly, as one speaks when one is sorry for another. Ivara must have comprehended the meaning of some of what she heard, for she answered:

"We ask him to—what?—*escoger*—ah! select! We go in, when he wake and ask him choose—yes, choose one! Which he loves best. See!"

"Poor Ivara!" mentally said Stenlake.

He saw his error now; the native woman, rather than being less capable of love than her white sister, was in reality more vehement. With the women of a warmer clime the emotions are deeper, less restrained, and she loved him with all the fire of her ardent nature.

Stenlake heard footsteps outside the cottage, and the voices ceased. Then he heard another speaker—a man. It was James Thornton!

"Has he come round yet? He appeared better and he ought to have opened his eyes by now." A pause, during which Stenlake imagined Thornton eyeing the two women. "I'll go in and see!"

He entered, and on seeing Stenlake looking towards him advanced with a smile.

"Ah, there you are, Stenlake! Come back to earth once more, eh? You've had a good bout this time, but you're pulling through. As soon as you get a bit stronger, I'm going to ship you off to the Old Country, so make haste and get well, my boy!"

He sat down by the side of the bed and took Harry's hand.

"What does it all mean?" asked Harry feebly. "Why is Millie here?"

He did not notice a strange look that passed over Thornton's face, nor did the strained tone of the reply attract his attention.

"I brought her, you see! You'll know all about it soon, but don't worry yourself now. You've got to get well quickly and go home. Now, if you feel strong enough I'll bring her in to see you!"

He left the room, and the next moment Millie Darrell appeared in the doorway.

"Millie, darling!" cried Harry ecstatically, holding out his weak arms.

She rushed to his bedside. At the door, watching the reunion, were Ivara and Thornton. The latter turned away, his teeth nearly piercing his lip in his effort to strangle a groan. Ivara watched for two or three seconds longer, then she also turned away with the words, in her own tongue, "He has chosen!"

In the outer room Ivara sank on a stool and wept. Thornton gazed at her curiously, but did not disturb her. When she looked up, he addressed her.

"It is not difficult to guess your secret, Ivara," he said tenderly, speaking in the dialect of the district. "I, too, have loved and lost! Let me tell you what she is doubtless telling him! When I went back to England, which was some time after I had left here, I determined to seek the girl who had told me that she loved another better than me. I found her. She still loved him. I learnt that he was the very man who had taken my place here! I felt that it was death to him if he stayed, and she had learnt from the firm that he had been ill.

"That was my chance. He might have died here, my rival! But I loved her, and gave up the chance. I undertook to return here, to relieve him, on condition that my appointment there was given to him. I have some money, and I brought her here to take him away. They can go back and be happy, while I—stop here!" There was a terrible significance in those last words. "Ivara, the women of your race have pluck. Show it!"

Ivara bowed.

"Let them go and be happy!" she said; "for his sake! I will stay and serve you, if you will have me."

"Good!" rejoined Thornton briefly. "Each of us has loved and lost. We can be companions in misfortune, thankful that we have helped to make the loved ones happy!"

**George Day.**

---

Housekeeper: "I ordered a dozen oranges to-day, Mr. Titefyst, and you only sent me eleven. How was that?" Grocer: "Well, ma'am, one of them was bad, and I didn't think you'd want it."

"I don't want mother to marry again," said a boy one day at breakfast. "Why not?" was asked, with some surprise. "Because," said he, "I've had one father, and I don't want the trouble of getting to know another."


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# . . A Chip of . . the Old Block.

## A Chapter of the Life Story that . . is Always New. . . .

"Then I just won't!—and there's an end of it!"

"And that's your last word, Marcie?"

"I've said so, haven't I?—what more do you want?"

"I hardly know, dear, since you put it in that way; because—well—because your having said your last word makes it useless for me to tell you what it is that I not only really want, but am hungering and thirsting for!"

"And that's something which I've been trying my hardest this half hour past to tell *you*. Tim Moffat, you can't, and never can have—so there!"

"All right, my gal!" he answered her. "I suppose you knows your own mind. Anyways, I shan't trouble you again. I wishes you well, Marcie—and a coronet, if you can manage to get one."

"Well, there's more unlikely things in the world than that. I'm as good as a play-actress—ain't I? If one of them brazen hussies can gammon a lord into weddin' of her; what's to prevent me, I should like to know, from doing the same, if I gets the chance?"

"Nothin', Marcie, nothin'! You're pretty enough, if that's anything."

"You don't say so! Compliments is passing. But it ain't no good. Tim Moffat, you won't catch me with a bit o' sugar! House o' Lords, or coster's barrer, take it from me, my lad, as I'm for your betters, so you'd best make up your mind to it, and own up to a tumble."

"Oh, I own's you've chucked me; if that's what you mean. I don't blame you. I only wants to know one thing; tell me that and I'll keep out of your shadder for the rest of my natural."

"What is it?"

"Is Jack the Dandy at the bottom of it?"

"At the bottom of what?"

"Of my tumble."

"What if he is?"

"Oh, nothin', only I'd just like to know, that's all."

"Then you won't—leastways, not from me!"

"*I* see—it is him!"

"I didn't say so."

"Well, you as good as; and that's enough for me."

"Now look here, Tim Moffat—it may be enough for you, but it's too much for me. You're a low, sneakin' coward!—that's what *you* are! If Jack the Dandy likes a walk with me, what's it got to do with you? You're too much like your father to suit me. *He's* afraid to say 'bo! to a goose,' and *you*—why, you'd faint to look an egg in the face."

The tall, sturdy young fellow whom the little spitfire was scorching to the full extent of her tongue, winced, big as he was, at the insult.

They were standing on the fringe of a holiday crowd on Hampstead Heath. For the past two years Tim Moffat, limelight man at a well known East End theatre, had been the sport of pretty little Marcie Doyle. There was no "playing at love" in his sweethearting. It would have been better, perhaps, had he smiled more and sighed less. Marcie was the very essence of brightness, and of a laughter-loving *abandon*, and the seriousness of her lover's wooing irritated her, when it did not incline her to ridicule, and even to downright rudeness.

Truth to say, she liked him—liked him, indeed, too well for her peace of mind; but with the unreasonable perverseness of her nature, she flouted him because—she liked him.

Tim Moffat, as straightforward and honest-hearted a man as could be found between Aldgate and Mile End, worshipped the very ground the girl trod, but, like many another before and since, he was blind to his own danger.

His upbringing had been exceptionally peculiar.

His father was one of those rare natures, which, if we read of them in books, we are inclined to set down as exaggerated and unreal.

Old Harry Moffat had married a woman, who, from her very wedding-day, had been a perpetual thorn in her husband's side. Times out of number had he suffered from her frenzied temper and always with a tender endeavour to hide from friends and neighbours her failings and his own sorrow.

Twice, in her murderous rage, had she attempted his life, and no one, save his own son, knew of the truly heroic forbearance with which he had dealt with her. Now, she was dead, and so well had the secret been kept by the man whose life she had spoilt and embittered, that no breath of suspicion attached to her memory, which, in the little world in which she had lived, was as green as that of the best amongst them.

Tim Moffat was his father over again—patient, uncomplaining, and yet a manly man. Even as the elder possessed the medal of the Royal Humane Society, in recognition of more than a score of lives saved from drowning, so did the younger wear upon his breast the Albert medal, bestowed by his Sovereign's own hand, for heroism in the teeth of the fiercest fire that ever devastated the crowded east of London city.

Deep down in her heart Marcie Doyle gloried in the praise of her lover on the lips of his fellow men, and, perhaps, but for the influence of Jack Hilton, otherwise Jack the Dandy, she would have yielded to her better feelings, and cast coquetting and its kindred ways to the four winds.

This Hilton was the leading-man at the theatre at which Tim Moffat was employed. A single man, he, as is not unusual with men of his position, was a universal lover.

By that is meant that, adored by the fair sex generally, of the East End, he had at last come to believe himself to be absolutely resistless, so far as women were concerned.

Marcie Doyle was only a "hand" in a big East End firm of sweating tailors; but when the well-dressed and fascinating actor deigned to smile upon the girl, who, waiting outside the stage-door for Tim, betrayed a pleased self-consciousness of the implied compliment, he simply saw an exceptionally pretty young woman, attired, for that part of the world, with really remarkable taste and simplicity.

"Marcie," Tim had said to her as he joined her that night just in time to see Mr. Jack Hilton's effusive salutation, "don't take any notice of that man's notice of *you!* He's nothin' to you—he can't be nothin' to you! More nor that—it'll be the worst day's work you'll ever do for yourself, and—and for me, if you ever looks at him!"

"Tim!" she answered him with what he thought was a strangely forced laugh, "you'll never learn sense! I can take care of myself. When I want any advice, I'll ask you for it. Till I do, you can keep it!"

Jack the Dandy was one of those cunningly keen people who make a rule of curious observation. He soon found out that Tim Moffat had more than a passing interest in Marcie Doyle. It pleased him, too, to know this, and to exercise his craft in, as he phrased it, "cutting out his humbler rival."

Now Tim was nothing if not a faithful servant, and would have cut off his right hand rather than betray his employer's trust.

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A time came when this sense of duty was tried to the uttermost, when every fibre in both body and soul strained and tingled till Nature almost gave up the struggle in despair.

It was one day in a particularly hot August. Tim had planned to take his sweetheart to Epping Forest. For her, it only meant the loss of a day's pay; for him, he would not only have gladly taken her loss upon himself, but would even have lavished his all upon her, would it but have made her happier.

But a call in the morning at her home, altered the aspect of things.

"Marcie," said her mother to Tim's inquiry, "she's gone out for the day to Southend."

"Do you know who she's gone with?" he asked.

"I thought as she was goin' with you!" was Mrs. Doyle's reply.

"Well, you can see as that isn't so," was all poor Tim could say.

"Yes, an' I don't like it, Tim, I'm sure she's been carrying on secret with somebody lately. She don't talk about you like she used to; an' what I *don't* like, she's been getting a lot of fal-lals and finery, which she can't afford, and which I know I can't."

This seemed to strike the key-note in Tim's mind.

But he didn't betray his thoughts to Marcie's mother. Ever the "chip of the old block" he would hide rather than blazon forth.

"Mrs. Doyle," he said, "she must have gone with some of her shop mates. You know what young girls are in these days. Of course, I'm disappointed at not being able to take her with me to Epping to-day, but there's more days behind the wood, and—and I'll meet the Southend boat—the *London Belle*—to-night when she comes in. There's nothin' for me to do till near ten o'clock; nothin', I mean, but what my man can do; and I'll slip away to London Bridge for an hour."

His talk with himself, however, as he rapidly made his way back to the theatre, was not nearly so sanguine in tone.

"No rehearsal to-day!—and Hilton not 'called' till nearly ten to-night! He's taken her; I'll swear it!—he's taken her! Well, if she cares for him better than she does for me, he shall marry her! He shan't make her believe that he's a little god, and then whistle her off his fingers! If she wants him, she shall have him; and I wish her well of her bargain!"

It was a semi-supernatural piece in which Hilton was playing that night, and in which he gained his main effect, as a modern sort of Mephistopheles, by a cunning disposition of lime and electric lights. Everything depended upon these being at the right moment in thorough working order.

Tim's first concern then when he reached the theatre, after leaving Mrs. Doyle's, was to busy himself with getting all the apparatus ready for the performance at night. The occupation soothed his nerves, and kept him from brooding too much upon his trouble with regard to Marcie. But when he had done all that could be done, and, everybody gone, he had the stage and its surroundings to himself, he could not shake off the feeling of boding depression which possessed him.

"I could ruin him," he speciously argued with himself, "if I let the lights go wrong. They'd guy him, and make no end of a row, if the devil—and he is a devil—didn't have his due! But that would be playing a bit low down, and wouldn't help Marcie or do me any good. No, if he is to be 'downed,' it shan't be by me."

He kept to his resolution to meet the Southend boat at Hermitage Wharf at nine o'clock, making arrangements with the stage-manager for a couple of hours' absence for that purpose.

"If the boat's late," he said reflectively, as he stepped on to the wharf, "and he can't 'go on' to-night, *that* wouldn't be my fault; and it'll teach him a lesson."

But for once the *London Belle* was up to time, and five minutes after nine had struck, her lights were seen slowly shooting the Tower Bridge.

It is the unexpected that nearly always happens, and though Tim almost instinctively *knew* what he should see, he was altogether unprepared for the coming "situation."

It took some time to get the big steamer warped alongside—time occupied by Tim in scanning the passengers in the half gloom for confirmation of his fears. But he could distinguish neither Marcie nor her escort.

Then the gangways were shipped and a stream of people crowded shorewards.

Quite at the end of the procession, Tim saw that which he had come to see.

As Marcie's foot touched the wharf, Hilton, who was immediately behind her, arranged a cloak over her shoulders.

It was at that moment that she caught sight of Tim, looking at her with a sad reproachfulness, which, frivolous as she was, cut her to the quick.

Hilton knew the limelight man, of course, and was at no loss to understand why he was there at that particular moment.

A gay, off-hand spirit of bravado was an important part of his personal stock-in-trade, and he drew upon it now, as being the best thing possible under the somewhat awkward circumstances.

"Ah, Moffat!—come down to look after me, eh? Very kind of you, seeing that you couldn't have known I was to be here."

Tim absolutely ignored both sneer and speaker. It was to Marcie that he spoke.

"I'll put you into a cab, and take you home," he said, "your mother's anxious about you."

Not a word as to his own disappointment.

Before the girl could reply, Hilton addressed himself to Tim.

"You see her home!" Tim blazed out. "What right have you to see her home?"

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"Look here, my man!" he said; "we don't recognise your right to interfere in any way with this young lady's affairs."

"No!" Tim hotly answered, "but I tell you, Mr.——"

"Don't trouble yourself to tell me anything," interrupted the other airily; "come along, my dear"—to Marcie—"I'll see you home first, and then I must get to the theatre as quickly as I can."

"You see her home!" Tim blazed out; "what right have you to see her home?"

"Tell him, my dear," said the actor, with a curious smile to Marcie.

"Tim!" she said, almost under her breath, "I'm never going to *that* home any more."

"Never——"

"No; Jack and I were married at Southend to-day, and I'm going now to his—to my home."

* * * * *

Contrary to Tim's expectation, things went on well for a time with the newly-married couple; until he almost came to believe that in the end things would settle down for Marcie in a happy and satisfactory way.

But in about six months' time rumours reached Tim's ears of something wrong.

It was said that Hilton was not only unkind to his wife, but was downright cruel.

She had been seen with an ugly cut above her eyebrow, while her white face and sadly subdued manner were reasonably convincing proof that poor Marcie was passing through a peculiarly painful experience.

This was the signal for Tim to be up and doing. He had, in quiet, undemonstrative fashion, like some faithful watch-dog, held himself in readiness for the moment when it might be that he should be wanted.

Fortunately for Marcie, the trouble was, in a way, short-lived.

Hilton had of late given way to drink to an extent that not only was a continual source of danger to his wife, but which threatened even his means of livelihood.

For some time the manager of the theatre had seen how things were going with his leading-man, and more than once strongly remonstrated with him.

"Don't presume," he said on one notable occasion, when Hilton could scarcely get through his duties; "don't presume too much upon your popularity with our audiences. A repetition of what has taken place to-night, will, I warn you, result in a cancelling of your engagement. I'm disposed to give you every chance; it rests with yourself to do or not to do. How's your wife? I hear she's been ill."

"What's that to you or to anybody! My wife's my business."

"Of course she is, but you needn't take a kind inquiry in that way, man!"

The other made no reply, but turning shortly on his heel, walked out of the theatre.

A week afterwards came the end.

Crossing the stage one night to get to his dressing-room, he was met by the stage-manager, who at once challenged him with being in an altogether unfit state to do his work.

"Leave the house!—your understudy will play the part to-night—and from this moment your engagement here is cancelled. I will write you to-morrow to that effect."

Hilton raged and stormed, but to no purpose, the manager in the end having to summon assistance to eject the drunkenly infuriated man.

There is not much more to tell, but that little is the keynote of this brief episode in three lives.

From the hour that he left the stage on that night, Jack the Dandy never played again. With every succeeding month he, and, as a consequence, his wife with him, for she would not, in spite of everything, leave him, sank lower and lower in the social scale.

Then it was that Tim—Tim the true-hearted, the unselfish,—devoted himself to keeping these two from the extremity of need.

"For her sake! For her sake!" was his watchword, and Hilton, debased as he was, knew that his own miserable existence depended upon his own good behaviour.

Gratitude to the man who kept life in him he had not, knew not the meaning of it; it was simply a matter of policy with him.

Then, one day, as Tim was on his way to the Hilton's lodging, he saw, while crossing Mile End Road, a drunken man knocked down and run over by a passing brewer's dray.

It was Jack the Dandy.

He could not have lived a minute after it happened, while Tim thought as he accompanied the body to the local mortuary that, even in his death, Jack Hilton was pursued by the thing that had been his curse.

* * * * *

Twelve months afterwards, on a lovely day in early spring, two people, a man and a woman, wandered quietly, and almost silently along the fresh green glades of Epping Forest.

Up towards High Beech they went until the crown of the hill reached, the man turned towards the woman, and asked her a question.

"Must I wait much longer, Marcie?" he said.

Then she caught his hand in hers.

"Tim," she answered him, "you still wish it! After all that's gone by?"

"Yes, dear!" was his reply. "I have nothing else to wish for."

"It isn't for me, Tim, to keep you from having your wish. You needn't wait any longer."

And the rest will be lived—not told.

**John Cowley.**

---

**FETTERED LIVES,** that thrilling romance of the stage, is to be seen on the stage. On February 9th, under the title of SHADOWED LIVES, Mr. Farmer's splendid romance, so long the fascination of *Pearson's Weekly* readers, is to be produced at the Kennington Theatre, London. A very good cast has been arranged, including many well-known players, and I shall be very much surprised if the drama does not prove a record success in London and the provinces, where the story excited such universal interest.

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# *A Gramophone for a Sentence.*

It is not everyone who can afford to buy a piano, or even a musical instrument of any sort, and to such persons a Gramophone—which is another name for a talking and singing machine—would be a much-prized gift.

Each Gramophone we are giving away is accompanied by two records, and is fitted with a Concert Sound-Box which greatly increases the volume of sound.

You can win a Gramophone by making a sentence, the words of which begin with the letters C, L, E, R, G, Y, T, A, R, T, A, N, in the order given.

A Gramophone will be given to each of the ten readers whose sentences the Editor considers best.

Post-cards only must be used, and they should be addressed to the TARTAN EDITOR, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, W.C., to arrive not later than first post on Tuesday, February 10th.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

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# The Story of a Story.

## Telling of a Loss and Two Gains.

"I am sorry, Miss—er—er" (the editor glanced at the card on his desk) "Miss Ellison, but the story is useless to me. It is not the kind of thing we ever use for *The Knapsack*. Perhaps you may be more fortunate elsewhere——"

The girl did not speak; her disappointment was so intense that if she had spoken she would have sobbed. There was silence in the room for a moment during which the sleek-looking young man at the desk carefully examined his well-kept finger nails, then she collected herself. "I am sorry too," she said simply; "I hoped it might do for you. I am very much obliged to you for seeing me about it."

The man gave a sigh of relief. The look of disappointment on the girl's face and the catch in her breath during that moment of silence had not been lost on him. He had feared a scene and was beginning to revile the good nature that had induced him to see her himself instead of relegating her to the mercies of his sub-editor, a brisk young man with a wonderful knack of disposing of even the most persistent visitors. To have a pretty girl weeping in one's editorial sanctum was not a desirable thing, and Ralph Hendrie suffered an agony of apprehension in those few seconds.

"The title is good," he added, partly because he really thought so and partly because he felt that her self-possession merited some slight reward, "very good, I may say, a most original one."

The girl gathered together her threads of courage. "Do you think," she said, (hoping that her agitation did not show itself in her voice, for how could this urbane young man know how badly she wanted money and how much depended on the story being accepted?) "would you advise me—do you think, I mean, that if I altered the story a little you might perhaps be able to take it then?"

"I am afraid not," said the man, "you see it is not the style of thing we want, not light enough, not cheerful enough, not—well, it would have to be completely rewritten and even then it might not do, you see?"

This was final. Barbara Ellison bowed her head. "Thank you," she said, "I am very much obliged to you. Good afternoon."

"Good afternoon," said the editor as he held the door open for her to pass out. "If you care to submit anything else I shall be pleased to consider it."

Once safely out of the room and in the crowded Strand where no one noticed her, Barbara let the tears which were smarting in her eyes, overflow. She looked at the long envelope in her hand and a feeling of impotent fury against it, herself, the editor, the whole world, seized her. Why should it be refused? Why should other people get their stories published and why were hers always returned? "I don't believe they even get read," she told herself bitterly; "they see they are by an unknown writer and don't bother about them." Then the gust of fury passed away as she remembered that Mr. Hendrie had at least said that the title was good. It was at any rate original. She remembered how she had found it. Years ago, when she was looking as she often did at the books on a second-hand bookstall, she had happened upon a collection of old rhymes, and one of them had stuck in her memory. She had forgotten the name of the author and the title of the rhyme, but,

*Treat the woman tenderly, tenderly,*
*Out of a broken rib God made*
*her slenderly, slenderly.*

had remained with her, and when she and Mollie found themselves parentless and almost penniless, when she had to do something to earn money and the writing fever had seized her, she had taken "Out of a Broken Rib" for the title of the story on which she had lavished infinite time and pains and perseverance, out of which she had hoped to make at least enough to pay the long-owing rent.

Again she looked resentfully at the envelope; was all her trouble worth nothing? Mollie, her sister, worked in a typewriting office and Barbara would gladly have done the same or anything else to increase their slender income, but she was so delicate that she was unable to undertake any regular work. She had tried many ways of making money at home; she had attempted needlework, but it was so poorly paid that it was not worth risking the loss of her eyesight for it; she had tried painting but there was no demand for her wares, and finally she had tried writing.

In the far away easy days when she and Mollie had had nothing to do but enjoy life, without a suspicion of the reverses Fate held in her hand for them, she had often written essays and stories for private magazines, and she believed that she could write if she could only find the right people to take her work. At present Mollie had only regular work for two days a week, the rent for six weeks was owing, winter, when expenses were always greater was approaching. What could she do?

She shivered and suddenly realised that she was still standing outside the *Knapsack* offices, that it was raining and getting dark. Mollie would be furious with her for going out on such a day. She was cold and tired. That editor had said perhaps some other paper would take her story, but it was too late now to try to-day, the clocks were chiming six. She put the manuscript into her pocket and hurried home.

"Oh, Barbara, darling, how could you go out on such a hateful afternoon?" was Mollie's reproachful greeting. "Your cold will be worse, I am sure. Why did you go? Where have you been? Take off your wet things quickly and I will make some tea. Here, let me take off your boots, see, they are soaking."

Barbara sat passive beneath her sister's reproaches and attentions. She was so tired, so thoroughly exhausted that for the moment nothing mattered but rest and warmth. But when she had had some tea and was rested, she told Mollie where she had been.

"I sent my story to the *Knapsack* six weeks ago. You know how badly we want money. I thought I would go and see the editor and ask him about it, but he said it was no good to him, not the kind of thing they ever wanted."

"The idiot!" said Mollie scornfully. "I am sure it is ten times cleverer than the silly stories he accepts and publishes. Did he say anything else?"

"He said—he was quite nice about it—that it was useless to him but that perhaps some other paper might take it, only I was so tired and it was too late to try anywhere else to-day. He said it was a very good title, Mollie," she added with an inflection of pride in her voice.

"There was no need for him to tell you *that*; we know it's a good title," said Molly stoutly, "it's a good story too, it's really a case of casting pearls before swine."

Barbara smiled faintly.

"Be just, Mollie, dear," she said, "the editor of the *Knapsack* must know better than we can what sort of stories he needs. Because you and I are prejudiced in its favour it does not follow that it is really good, although in my heart I can't help thinking it *is* a good story and perhaps someone else may think so too. Let us look at it again and see where we can send it to-morrow. Will you get it please, Mollie? It is in my coat pocket."

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Mollie went into the next room. She was gone for so long that Barbara called to her. "It is in the right pocket, in a plain envelope." Mollie came back with empty hands and a troubled look on her face. "I can't find it," she said.

"Can't find it? Why, I know I put it into my pocket. Let me look."

But Barbara's looking proved as futile as had Mollie's. The story was not there. Where, or how, it had fallen out of the pocket it was impossible to say. After the first feeling of loss Barbara was quite philosophical.

"I don't think it really matters," she said. "I don't suppose I should have had better luck with it than I have had. Mr. Hendrie did not know when he said that perhaps it might do for someone else, that I have already sent it to so many papers, that it tires me to think of them. No, Fate meant that story to be worthless, and Fate has once and for all put an end to any hopes of ours that it might be otherwise."

"Very likely you will get it back," suggested Mollie. "It had your name and address on, so any honest person would bring it here."

"Only my name was on it, and what does 'Barbara Ellison' convey to anyone? I wrote a letter with it, of course, but I tore that up as soon as I got out of the office, and there was nothing on the envelope. No, we shall never see 'Out of a Broken Rib' again. It is no good. You know how hard I have tried, Mollie."

Mollie was more cheerful. "Well, if it is lost it is, I suppose," she remarked, "but you might try to write another story with the same title. Anyhow, it's no good to bother any more about it to-night. Let's go to bed. Something may turn up. Some long-lost uncle of whom we never heard may die in New Zealand and leave us a fortune."

The next day, however, there was no question of Barbara being able to write or do anything else. She had caught a severe chill, which finally developed into pneumonia.

It would be impossible to describe all that Mollie suffered during her sister's illness. Fortunately their landlady was a kind-hearted woman, who said nothing about the long owing rent and looked after the invalid with a certain amount of tenderness and skill. But things were very black for the two girls, and in spite of all Mollie's efforts the cloud of debt around them grew thicker and thicker. At last a day came when the worst of the illness was over, when the doctor said Barbara had nothing to do but get strong again.

She was lying on the sofa one dreary December afternoon, longing for Mollie's return, and wondering whether their particular cloud had any lining except of the blackest hue, when Mollie suddenly dashed into the room, her face wreathed with smiles, her eyes dancing with excitement.

"A most wonderful thing has happened, Barbara," she gasped, breathless with hurry and eagerness. "You could never guess, so I will tell you. Look here! Look! See! Do you know why I bought the *Monthly Library*, though it cost one shilling, and we have only five shillings in all the world?" And she flourished the purple covers of the well-known magazine in her sister's face.

"I don't know, Mollie. Tell me."

"Why, your story is in it! Your story, 'Out of a Broken Rib,' you know your story you lost before you were ill. Here it is, published, printed, with your name to it, and a note by the editor asking for your address. Why, your fortune is made, Barbara! Fancy having a story in the *Monthly Library!* You see, I was right when I said that *Knapsack* man was an idiot!"

She was incoherent with excitement. As for Barbara she could hardly believe her eyes when she saw on the first page of the magazine in which the best-known writers of the day were proud to find their work, her story and her name. Above it were a few lines: "The editor will be greatly obliged if Barbara Ellison will communicate with him at once."

"I must go," she said. "I must go and see him. I am better now, and I must go first thing to-morrow. But tell me Mollie, how did you find out my story was in this?" And she fingered the magazine lovingly.

"Why, it was all luck or chance, or whatever you like to call it," answered Mollie, who was dancing round the room to let off her excitement. "I was having my lunch at that A.B.C. shop near the Adelphi, you know, and two gentlemen were sitting at the same table, and one of them said 'Have you seen that clever story in this month's *Library!* It's called "Out of a Broken Rib."' Of course I pricked up my ears and then he said, 'I wonder who Barbara Ellison is, never heard of her before, but she knows how to write, if she is a woman, that's to say.' Just fancy, Barbara, thinking you might be a man! And then they went on talking more about it, but I was so excited I just gobbled my lunch and went and bought a copy. Oh, Barbara, how lovely it is! I wonder how much they will pay you for it?"

The next day Barbara, still pale and weak, was taken to the offices of the *Monthly Library* by Mollie, who waited for her downstairs while she was shown with great deference into the editor's room, and there explanations were given.

"I must apologise, Miss Ellison," said the editor, "for publishing the story without your permission. I can only hope you will forgive me when I explain matters to you. I picked it up in the Strand one evening some weeks ago, and there was no address on it and no clue but the name. Perhaps I was wrong not to have made more searching inquiries. I did advertise the finding of it in one or two newspapers, but I suppose you did not happen to see them. It was exactly the story I wanted for my Christmas number, and had vainly tried to find. So I published it and trusted to chance that you would know I had done so. I hope you will forgive me. I have a cheque, at our usual rate of payment, ready for you now."

He handed her a piece of paper, and Barbara saw through a mist that it was for £10. Never in her most hopeful moments had she expected such payment. She saw the rent paid, their most pressing debts disposed of.

"Oh," she said faintly, "I can't tell you—I can't thank you." She tried to pull herself together, but she was still weak from illness, and where perhaps pride and disappointment might have supported her, gratitude and relief broke down her self-control. The editor was looking at her curiously, and there was something in his face, something in the compassionate expression of his eyes that encouraged her.

Almost before she knew that she was doing so, she was pouring out to him the story of her troubles. She told all, their poverty, her attempts at writing, her rebuffs and disappointments, her visit to the *Knapsack*, her losing of the story, her illness, and the editor's eyes were not quite so clear as usual when she had finished. He spoke to her words of kindly encouragement, and appreciation, and expressed the hope that he might have the refusal of anything else she wrote. And then an event unprecedented in the history of the office, he took her downstairs himself.

"Bless me, what's up?" remarked one of the errand boys, "here's the boss bringing a lady downstairs. Well, I never. She's not up to much neither, not my style, too pale and puky-looking."

"You shut up," remarked one of his *confrères*, possessed of keener perceptions, "she must be up to a good deal or the boss wouldn't bother about her."

Once safely in the cab, which Mollie insisted on having, Barbara's feelings completely overcame her. "Oh, Mollie," she cried, "he was so kind and delightful to me, and he wants me to let him have the refusal of everything I write, and see what he has paid me for my story! I never imagined anything so wonderful could happen." And she leant back with a sigh of content, for truly troubles and poverty seemed to be turning away and prosperity and joy were coming out of their hiding-places.

The editor of the *Monthly Library* finds his most valued contributor and his greatest helper in his wife, and she and the "Barbara Ellison" whose name is famous in the literary world, and whose first short story appeared in his magazine, are one and the same person.

**Claudia Ashton.**

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# HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

**LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS.** A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

**BELINDA NORTH.** The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

**DUKE OF EASTACRES.** A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

**DAVID CARR.** A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

**STANLEY FORBES.** A famous barrister.

**SHEILA KENWYN.** Forbes' cousin, whom Eastacres has wronged.

**ALPHONSE HERVÉ.** An eminent French artist in love with Belinda.

**PRINCESS VERA ZOULOFF.** A celebrated Russian beauty.

**BARON ROLLA.** An extremely wealthy Parisian, in love with Belinda.

## I Make a Compact with Belinda.

You must not imagine that Vera created a scene; we don't do such things in our set except with our intimates. Only the little *coterie* immediately surrounding the Princess realised anything much was amiss. The rest merely concluded that she felt faint, or had chosen an effective method of showing off her latest victim. David looked quite interesting and behaved wonderfully well. He just picked her up and carried her out of the room as if she were a little girl instead of a splendidly developed woman.

I left him to restore her, and turned my attention to Belinda and the Duke. The former showed no signs of disquietude, but waltzed as gaily and as gracefully as though nothing had occurred out of the ordinary.

Eastacres greeted me with an inscrutable smile.

"Well," said I abruptly, "and what is the meaning of all this? Is Zouloff really dead, or——"

He stopped me with a gesture.

"He was shot through the heart this afternoon in a duel. No, it was not to do with the Princess. A gaming dispute. The Prince held either too many aces or too few—I forget which; in any case his adversary took exception, and as a result"—Eastacres shrugged his shoulders. "I think the Princess makes a charming widow," he said smiling. "And, if I am not mistaken, Mr. Carr is of the same opinion."

"Why did you bring the news?" I asked abruptly.

"I met Litoff of the Russian Embassy—he told me. He added that the Princess would receive an official communication of the fact to-night; but it was not possible to let the poor lady remain in ignorance of her husband's death. It was not in good taste to let her dance in the shadow of so great a grief! Therefore I told her"—he looked at me and smiled in such a malignant, I had said diabolical, fashion, that I felt quite uncomfortable.

"You are most considerate, Duke," I said gravely. "If it is not indiscreet to ask, was it only Vera's feelings you were consulting?"

"The Princess," he said quietly, "and my own."

"You admire Vera?" I hazarded.

"I admire all beautiful women," he answered, "but I desire to marry only one—Belinda."

"And you brought this information to the Princess——"

"In order that she might give some proof of her regard for the man whom you so thoughtfully fetched over from Petersburg—David Carr. It was wonderfully clever of you, Lady Peggy. I always admire talent even if I am not in a position to appreciate it. To bring Belinda's lover under the influence of another woman was a master stroke of policy. A master stroke of which I am going to avail myself." As he spoke he moved towards Belinda and Lord Farringdon.

"Eastacres," I said sharply, "what are you going to do? Be reasonable, I beg of you, and do not run the risk of a rebuff. Belinda will refuse to speak to or acknowledge you."

"I don't intend to give her the opportunity—at present," he said calmly. "I am going to have a little conversation with Farringdon, that is all. He was my fag at Eton, you know, and——"

I cut short his explanation, and linking my arm in his, impelled him towards the door.

"It's no use, my dear Duke," I said smiling, but holding him tightly all the same. "I am famished. You simply must take me to the supper room. I won't let you speak to anyone till you've looked after me."

I made this observation in a voice somewhat above the usual society monotones. It was impossible to refuse such an audible request, and against his will Eastacres had to yield.

"Now," said I, when under my guidance he had piloted me safely to the morning-room, "for the second time I ask you what does all this mean? That you had some motive in coming here other than consideration for the Princess, is perfectly plain, and the question is are you going to explain that motive, or am I to find it out?"

He shrugged his shoulders and sneered in a fashion that roused my indignation.

"I ask you once again, Eastacres," I said firmly, "if you still decline to answer, you will only have yourself to thank for what ensues."

"Oh, have your own way," he said irritably. "I will tell you; but mind this"—and he put his face uncomfortably close to mine—"protest as you will, I shall follow out my plan. I came here to-night because I knew Vera and David Carr would be together. I waited to give my little piece of information about Zouloff until the moment when Belinda

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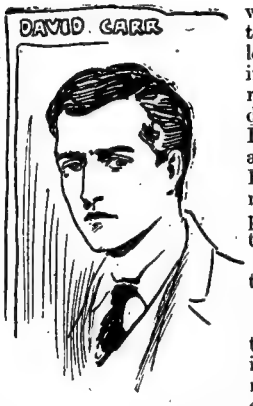


was near to the Princess, so near that she could see the look in her lover's eyes as he caught her rival in his arms, so near that she could realise how utterly that rival had displaced her. Belinda knows, as I know, that Carr loves the Princess, and she"—he smiled—"she is a Russian," he added slowly, "and more than a little mad. It is quite possible that she will be mad enough to make this engineer her husband."

"Well," I said eagerly, "what then?"

He turned upon me swiftly.

"Then," he said, "I come upon the scene and catch Belinda's heart in the rebound. Oh, I am not mistaken, my dear lady, nor deceived. I know well how you have kept your compact with me, how in my absence you have adroitly edged Farringdon into the part we had agreed that I alone should fill. But she shall not marry Farringdon; I will prevent that. He is in love with her, that is true, and a man so young as he will do much for love. But there is one thing that, in spite of all your cleverness, you have overlooked—his pride. Touch him there, and not even love will move him. A word from me, a hint that Belinda made and kept a midnight *rendezvous* with me in Paris, and not all her beauty, or her wealth will make him offer her his name."

"You tell him at your own peril," I said excitedly. "Stanley——"

"Bah," he said, snapping his fingers, "what can *he* do? Farringdon is not likely to mention what I tell him, and otherwise no one will know. No, my dear Peggy, neither you nor Stanley can take a hand in this game. The only rival I had cause to fear with Belinda, was the engineer. Thanks to your cleverness, your all too astute diplomacy, that rival is removed. He will no longer trouble me. Farringdon I shall deal with this evening. And then for Belinda and her millions!"

The man's vanity was colossal. Deep in his heart, despite her rebuffs, insults, defiance, and dislike, was the conviction that Belinda would even yet accept him. If, as he threatened, he spoke to Farringdon, I knew enough of the young lord to feel convinced he would at once give up all notion of making Belinda his wife. As Eastacres said, Farringdon's pride was very great, so great that it became an objection. I must act quickly and decisively; even now he might be proposing to the girl, and she, smarting under David's desertion, would be inclined to listen favourably. At all costs the Duke must be kept from interference—but how?

An inspiration came to me at that very moment.

I went quite close to Eastacres and laid my hand on his arm.

"We had better understand each other," I said calmly. "You threaten to warn Farringdon against Belinda—that in fact is the card by which you hope to win the trick. Play it if you like, but I shall play a better one. Speak to Farringdon, and on the instant I wire to Alphonse Hervé. He is already on the road to recovery—quite well enough, at all events, to take the chance that I shall give him."

"My dear Peggy, you are not clever to-night. How will the presence of Alphonse affect Belinda?"

I laughed contemptuously. "It is you, not I, that are dense, my dear Duke. Do you not understand that it is Alphonse not David that Vera loves? Once let her see the Frenchman, and she will fling David to the winds! Love is so much stronger than jealousy. She is jealous of Belinda, but Alphonse—she loves!"

"And then," he said, "then——".

"David will return to Belinda, and she——" I paused, amused at his look of consternation.

"Are you fooling me?" he said roughly. "Does the Princess really care for that artist fellow?"

"Where were your eyes—your ears these last five years?" I answered. "I speak the truth, Vera is playing with David out of spite to Belinda. I say again it is Alphonse she really loves."

I spoke the words irascibly with an accent of triumph in my voice. The next moment I would have given much to recall them. Belinda, passing down the passage on Lord Farringdon's arm, heard what I said, and, turning, gave me a look at once radiant and reproachful.

Leaving her escort she flew towards me.

"Do you mean it?" she said eagerly. "Oh, Lady Peggy, is it really true?"

There was not a moment in which to think out my answer. I seized at the first excuse that presented itself.

"No," I answered quickly, but softly—"it is not. I said so to keep the Duke quiet. He has declared his intention of punishing David for his open neglect of you. And remembering what you suffered the night of the duel with Alphonse"—I paused and edged her discreetly from the room. "Eastacres positively terrifies me, Belinda; for goodness' sake, my dear child, go quickly away and take Farringdon with you."

Belinda heard me out in silence. Then with a look about her mouth that I had learnt to understand, signified her intention of seeking the Princess and asking for an explanation.

"I won't compromise you, Lady Peggy," said this truly terrible girl. "I won't let her know what I heard you say, but I must ask her once and for all if she cares for—for David?"

"I never heard a more indecent proposition!" I cried indignantly. "Absolutely you have no delicacy. You propose to ask the Princess at the very moment when she has received the news of her husband's death, whether she is in love with another man! Frankly, Belinda, I am ashamed of you."

"She doesn't care," said the girl rebelliously; "at the very instant she heard of his death she turned to—to David. Why should I pay more respect to her feelings than she shows herself?"

"There's no argument in the matter, Belinda. The Princess is judge of her own conduct. Who are you to criticise it? I say you shall *not* go to her." I gave emphasis to the remark by summoning Lord Farringdon and abruptly asking, almost commanding him to take Belinda down to supper.

In face of this proceeding she had not the wit to devise an excuse, nor the audacity to frame a refusal. I watched them disappear, then catching my breath, reached the entrance hall just in time to intercept the Princess who, duly recovered, was on the way to her carriage. David was in close attendance and seemed much concerned.

"I shall see you to-morrow, dearest," I murmured to Vera. "I cannot tell you how much or how deeply I sympathise with you. You will indeed feel lost without the Prince."

Vera, smiling sweetly, made a suitable reply, whispering as she passed me that "the dear David was becoming troublesome in his devotion."

I contrived to have a word with the young man before he left. I told him I was charmed to see him looking so well, congratulated him upon his prospects—engineering and otherwise—and wound up with a discreet allusion to Belinda's forthcoming engagement to Lord Farringdon.

"I believe he's a very decent fellow," said Carr quietly, "he is at any rate a very lucky one. I should have liked to congratulate Miss North personally, but I fear I shall not have time. I leave for Russia to-morrow morning. You will tell her for me, Lady Carstairs, how much I hope for her happiness? I know how eloquent you can be on another's behalf."

He pressed my hand, and with a smile worthy of Eastacres himself, hurried after Vera.

So far so good, he would depart to-morrow imbued with the belief that Belinda was lost to him for ever. I had but to instil a similar conviction into Belinda's mind to make clear the way for the completion of my plans.

The next morning I kept her with me all the time. My one fear being, that through the malignity of chance, she

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might catch sight of David, and, at the last moment, arrive at some explanation as to the true state of affairs. I took her down Bond Street, and plunged into a long and intricate discussion with her *modiste* as to the colours which best suited her for evening. I was replenishing her wardrobe and my own, with a view to Trouville, where we were bound early in July. I had originally intended to present Belinda at the next drawing-room, but at the last moment her father had decided that the ceremony should be deferred until after the marriage.

I acquiesced in the arrangement, was indeed rather glad of it. People were already making remarks as to why I chaperoned Belinda, rumours being abroad to the effect that I had lost my money. Had I presented her, the rumour would have been substantiated. My friends knew me too well to think I should go through such a fatiguing thing as a drawing-room without a substantial reason.

We had lunch at Prince's—I simply could not go home to starvation at Brook Street—and then after a drive in the Park, went round to Vera's place in Park Lane. I knew by that time David would have gone, and I wanted to know what had transpired.

I feel I must devote some few lines to the description of the Princess' house. As a general rule one house is much like another in Society. Making allowance for the taste of the owner—or the lack of it—you receive the same impression of ease and luxury wherever you go. In the Zouloff establishment the atmosphere is distinct; it has, so to speak, an individuality. The hall, wide and lofty, is plain, almost to bareness, unrelieved by any attempt at ornamentation, save for a massive group of figures wrought in bronze, magnificently barbaric.

At the end of the hall is a lofty chamber composed of rare and precious woods; panel upon panel of wonderful carving, Oriental in design and execution, lines the walls; the windows of stained glass harmonise with the conception. Low-cushioned seats and divans form the furniture, the floor is *parqueterie*, polished like glass. A staircase leads from this chamber to a gallery running round the apartment.

The gallery is lined with glass cases filled with exquisite curios. One could spend hours in this wonderland; passing from specimens of Indian jewellery, gorgeous in the extreme, African diamonds and sapphires, delicate ivories, to a miniature fairyland of coral, seaweed, and many-hued fishes arranged in such similitude to life, that for the moment you forget you gaze on the dead treasures of the ocean.

The Zouloff collection is well-known and much appreciated. Possibly some of you that read this have wandered under that carved roof lit by a cluster of lamps hanging like lotus lilies from a stem. The Princess was bitten at one time with a craze to enlighten the minds and educate the taste of the middle-class. She used to hold "At Homes," where weird men and strange women used to congregate, collecting in corners where they stood in frozen silence, or worse, in giggling familiarity. All sorts of "Societies" used to have their yearly meeting at the Zouloffs' house—Archæological, Episcopalian, Nonconformist, Artistic, and Rationalist people used to gather there. At one time I used to help the Princess entertain—I must say you people want a lot of entertaining!

And your manners! Some of you had coffee and tea when you arrived, coffee and tea when you left, and perpetual coffees all the afternoon! Really I used to long to correct you! The girls were the worst—especially those that came with their *fiancés*. Some of them would take the "young man" aside and whisper comments on the people close at hand, or, worse still, question him as to his doings during the day. Where had he been? Or what had he eaten? With an entire disregard of the fellow-guests that was positively appalling.

In the days when, as a girl, I used to appear at the annual dinner given by my father to the peasants on his estate, I was struck by the self-possession of their manner, the quiet good sense of their conversation, the simplicity of their bearing. They were superior in every way to the middle-class men and women Princess Zouloff used to entertain.

I mentioned some of my conclusions to Belinda, but she did not take kindly to my strictures. She had an intense pride in the class from which she came, and would not tolerate its being found fault with in the least particular.

Vera received us in the oaken chamber I have told you of. It was known in the house as the music-room, being used for concerts and musical receptions.

"It is very good of you to see us, dear Princess," I said effusively.

"Not at all, my dear Peggy. I set out for Russia to-night, to return, I know not when. I should be an ingrate if I denied myself to you and Belinda. Such a pity," she went on softly, "that you were not here a little earlier. Twenty minutes since my friend, of whom I spoke to you, *chérie*," she turned to Belinda, "came to say farewell! I should so much have liked you to meet him—especially as it seems he is an old acquaintance of yours. He only discovered that he knew you last night, when I so inopportunely fainted. He left this note for you, dear child," she handed Belinda a letter as she spoke, and leaving the girl to read it we went up to the gallery.

"It is all right," said Vera, smiling at my look of anxiety, "the note is very short and I think not altogether sweet. Ah, I thought so! See"—she touched my arm and pointed to Belinda who, unaware that she was overlooked, had thrown herself upon a couch, burying her head among the cushions, and was sobbing bitterly.

Vera leant over the balustrade.

"*Chérie*," she called softly, "come up here. I want you." Then, before I had time to protest, she whirled me into a little room screened off from the gallery, containing a very old and very ugly statue of Buddha or some other heathen god, and went half way down the stairs to meet Belinda.

The girl had dried her tears and regained her composure of manner—so much I gathered peeping under Buddha's arm. She still looked pale, however, and her attitude towards the Princess was defiant.

"You gave me this note," she said, throwing up her head as though in challenge. "You said also that David told you he knew me. Did he tell you that he loved me, and had hoped to marry me, as I still hope to marry him?"

"Impossible! My dearest child, consider what you say. You do not mean that you, who have openly encouraged Lord Farringdon, have been in reality secretly engaged to David Carr?"

"I am not engaged to David," said Belinda slowly, "but what I say is true none the less. We loved each other, but we agreed to wait for a year, because my father wished me to see and know what I believe is called 'Society.'"

"I have had many offers of marriage," she went on, "but never was I tempted to give a second thought to any. Did you know that David had loved me?" She went close to Vera, staring at her with clear, compelling eyes.

"Is it likely? Do you think men talk to *me* of their love for other women?"

"Did you know I loved him?"

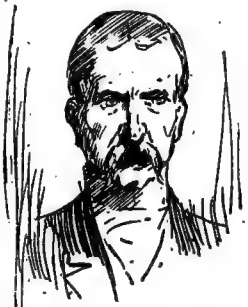
"Not till you told me. Poor child, it is bad to give love for indifference."

"He is not indifferent," flashed the girl. "See, there is a proof of it." She thrust the note into Vera's hands.

"'Farewell—for ever,' read the Princess, 'I wish you all the happiness that you deserve.' A little commonplace in expression, but the sentiment——"

Belinda stopped her abruptly with a motion of her hand.

"I tell you he loves me still," she cried; "you have infatuated, fasci-



THE DUKE OF EASTACRES

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nated him, but that is not the same as love. Give him back to me," she stretched out her hands. "You are so much more beautiful than I—I have no chance against you. You do not care for him. You can choose from the world of men. Who is there can withstand you? Leave me David, I ask you, I beg you; leave me the love of this one man, a man you do not care for."

Vera laughed softly, cruelly, touching the bracelets on her wrist the while.

"Suppose I do not care for him? What then? He would go to the other end of the world at my asking. He worships the very ground I walk on. Few men have the capacity for love that David Carr possesses. Why should I give him up to you?"

"Why not?" asked Belinda. "You are a brave woman and a strong and clever one. Women like you don't do mean and petty things unless they have some special reason. I have never wittingly injured you. Tell me"—she caught the Princess' arm—"why are you against me in this matter?"

Vera's eyes flashed, a deep flush tinged the creamy pallor of her skin.

"Because I hate you," she said fiercely. "Because each time I look at you I feel afresh my own humiliation. You, a mere school-girl, succeeded where I failed; you, with your baby face and childish ways, won the heart I could not keep. You are the girl Alphonse Hervé loves; I the woman he has left. Now do you wonder that I hate you, that it gives me exquisite pleasure to hurt you? David Carr is lost to you; you have me to thank for that. What shall I do with him?"—she shrugged her shoulders—"marry him, perhaps."

"No," said Belinda, "you shall not marry him. You will marry Alphonse Hervé. I say so. I pledge my word he shall come back to plead for your forgiveness. I never have broken a promise yet, and that I promise you. I mean it." She gazed at Vera with bright, shining eyes. "And, you must promise something in return. Give me your word you will not write to David for three months. In three months Hervé will have made his peace with you, and I——" She paused, then with a sudden charming gesture raised the Princess' hand, and kissed the slender fingers.

"Promise me," she said softly.

For a moment the Princess hesitated, then with a shrug she acquiesced.

"I promise," she said slowly. "For three months I will not write nor send to David Carr, on the understanding that you will not do so either. In three months time I shall send for him and for you also. And then——" She stopped, and a curious smile twitched at her lips.

"Thank you," said Belinda quietly, almost humbly. "You are very good." Then with a sigh she left the gallery, returning to the music-room.

I emerged from the contemplation of Buddha and with a few hurried words to Vera, joined Belinda. I made no allusion to her compact with the Princess until we reached Brook Street. Then in the privacy of my room I opened fire.

"Vera has told me what you said to her this afternoon, Belinda," I remarked. "What was your object in making this agreement about David Carr?"

"In three months time Alphonse will return to the Princess," she answered, "and David will realise that she was only playing with him all the while. His infatuation over, his affection for me will once more be supreme."

"Suppose for the sake of argument that Vera should choose David instead of Alphonse, what will you do then?"

"I can't say," she answered listlessly, "it seems impossible."

"It is very highly probable," I answered sharply. "Now, listen to me, and see if we can't come to some sort of an understanding. I will give you your own way in this matter. That is to say, I will not interfere in any of your plans—on one condition. That, failing David Carr, you will marry——!"

"Not the Duke," she interrupted passionately, "never the Duke."

"Who then—shall we say Farringdon?"

"Very well," she answered lightly, "let it be Farringdon. You see"—she turned towards me—"I am so sure of David that I feel safe in promising anything.

"Lord Farringdon has already proposed to me," she went on, blushing—"I had a letter from him this morning. Will you tell him for me that he shall have a decided answer in three months."

My way during the next few months was plain. I must so arrange that Belinda should not hold any communication with Alphonse Hervé. So long as the artist stayed away from Vera, so long would she keep David in her toils. I had only to prevent a reconciliation between Hervé and the Princess to insure Belinda's engagement to Farringdon.

I told Eastacres something of the truth—only I substituted *his* name for Farringdon's. I don't think he believed all I said, but he was convinced of enough to make him realise that, for his own sake, it would be better to keep quiet as to what took place in the Rue Burgoyne. For the present I had no cause to fear him.

Belinda wrote to Hervé the day after her interview with Vera. I intercepted the letter, and quite forgot to post it! Belinda was troubled at not receiving a reply, and formed a project for asking him over to England—the Duchess of Staunton let her have her own way in everything. I nipped the idea in the bud, however, by announcing that we must start for Trouville at an earlier date than I had anticipated.

"We shall have to leave town directly, Belinda," I said abruptly. "They won't keep our rooms at the hotel after this week, and I can't put up with any others. We had better cross to-morrow. Midge and your old admirer, Reggie, are travelling then, we can all go together."

I did not give her time to argue the question, and the next day found us in mid-channel, on our way to that smartest of smart watering places, Trouville.

Belinda took quite kindly to the place and grew more friendly with Farringdon daily. She was a little worried about Hervé, but it was only on occasions that she remembered him; for the most part she was in splendid form, and as usual her admirers grew and multiplied.

Surely she had reason to be bright; there was the charming blue sea beside her; a balmy, fluttering breeze around her; a crowd of the most fashionable sunshades in Europe before her. The yachts came and went, the sands glittered, the music sounded, men and women in bright-coloured stripes took headers into the tide, or pulled themselves about in little canoes; the faces of all the houses were lively with green shutters and cool awnings; people the gayest and best born in Europe, laughed and chattered and made love.

As for the mixed bathing, which I believe vexes your poor souls every autumn, when, in the off season you scrape up enough to run across the channel—that goes on daily and sometimes all day long at Trouville. Belinda turned scarlet at the sight of Midge's bathing-dress—a wonderful affair in gold and purple, and inquired if she were actually going to wear it?

Midge screamed with laughter, and told the story that morning on the beach. All the women and most of the men sneered at the girl as old-fashioned, but Farringdon quite approved of her taste. He had agreed to wait three months for Belinda's decision.

We had been at Trouville about a week, and I was congratulating myself on the way things were going, when something happened that threatened to seriously inconvenience me.

Belinda was going for a sail in Farringdon's yacht, was in fact just going aboard, when I saw her wave a handkerchief at someone on the beach and exhibit signs of strong excitement. She evidently wished Farringdon to put her on shore, but he refused; the tide was going out.

The next moment I felt a hand upon my shoulder, and a low voice murmured a compliment in my ear.

Thank Heaven that Belinda was already out at sea, and that I should have an opportunity of speaking to the newcomer before her return! The man now standing on the beach beside me was—Alphonse!

*(How I got out of my difficulty will be told next week.)*

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# WHICH WAS THE MAN?

**Telling of What Happened When the Lights Went Out.**

The ever perplexing question of choosing between two equally desirable suitors had come to Inez Waring.

Neither had yet spoken his heart, for the reason that Inez was always on the alert to prevent such an avowal.

Although the reigning belle of the city and accustomed to the compliments of men, she had retained full possession of a conscience. To prevent the proposal of either man until she was certain of her own feelings was her one wish and aim.

But despite continued deliberation it became daily more difficult for Inez to determine which of the two her heart preferred.

"And wise ones say," she mused, "that when a woman is thus undecided it is proof positive that she does not love either of her suitors."

But the thought was unwelcome. Something within her rejected it at once. Her admiration for both Miles Henshaw and Owen Forbes went very deep. Should she lose the friendship of either her life would feel the loss keenly. Should she lose the companionship of both—ah, but that must not be! One of them she must keep. But which one?

The question pursued her. On the night of Mrs. Crandall's theatre party it clamoured with unusual insistence. Henshaw was at his best that evening. But so was Forbes.

Inez observed them both with a new intentness. Henshaw was decidedly the handsomer, yet Forbes had a fascination of personality which the former could not boast.

The girl herself was radiantly beautiful, as always. The numerous opera glasses levelled at their box from the stalls were focussed chiefly upon her blossom-like perfection.

Mrs. Crandall's daughter, Grace, had her share of attention. Winsome and sparkling, she made up in charm of manner what she lacked in actual beauty. She was considered a fascinating girl. Certainly Seth Harrington must have thought so. His gaze seemed incapable of including anything or anyone but her.

Inez noted this and smiled. "She, too, will have a question to decide," she thought, musingly. "I wonder——" But the curtain went up just then. The question of Seth Harrington and Grace Crandall retired to some remote recess of her mind for later consideration.

The curtain had rung down on the last act and the audience was just rising to its feet when a most unexpected and startling thing happened. All the lights in the place went out, leaving the people in total darkness.

After the first wave of consternation the crowd was reasonable enough to obey the command of a voice from the stage. They remained quiet, the majority reseating themselves at once. Mrs. Crandall's party were already leaving the box and groped helplessly in the gloom.

"Well!" exclaimed the matron, "this is certainly diverting, to say the least." Her good humour was infectious, and the others of the party joined her in laughing over the predicament.

"I've entirely lost my bearings," declared Inez. "I don't believe I can distinguish north from south."

"I wouldn't care about north or south if I could find a seat," said someone else. "How long is this oblivion supposed to last?"

"Perhaps interminably."

"Perish the thought!"

At intervals as they jostled each other one would cry: "Who is this?" and the answer would come: "And who is this?"

Inez put out her hand and touched a man's coat sleeve. "Who is this?" she questioned.

The response came in a swift and eager whisper: "Dear, don't you know?"

She felt her hand seized in a grasp so ardent that her pulse leapt. Was it Forbes or Henshaw?

Before she could decide, "Dearest, you do know—you do!" came softly against her cheek. The unseen one drew her suddenly to his lips. "I love you!" he said.

It was as though a shower of rosy sparks had blossomed out of the darkness. In that moment Inez knew that she loved this man—whoever he was, she loved him.

"Try to love me!" went on the voice. "Promise me you will try. May I hope?"

"Yes," came her gently breathed reply.

Her own answer startled her and she freed her hand, moving hurriedly away from him. Just then the lights flashed up.

Thoroughly bewildered and somewhat blinded by the sudden illumination, Inez could not perceive who it was that stood nearest her. When she did look, with cleared vision, to discover which man it was to whom she had given her promise, she discovered Grace Crandall standing where she had supposed her wooer had been. Seth Harrington was holding the girl's opera cloak.

"I must have been altogether confused as to direction," she concluded, and then, glancing hastily at the faces of Forbes and Henshaw in turn, "Both of them look guilty—or do I fancy it?"

It was Henshaw who went home with her. Inez waited with a beating heart for the first word or sign from him. But although she read the story of love in his eyes, as always, he made no reference to the incident of the box. His manner gave no indication whatever of remembrance. Then it must be Forbes.

Now, as she thought of him, she realised vividly that she had always wished it to be Forbes.

When he called the next day she went in to meet him with a fluttering heart and a consciousness of confusion.

Yes! As she met his eyes there was the same thrill, the same radiance of that memorable evening.

As the two stood gazing at each other there seemed no need, somehow, for any words. Reference to that first time of confession would have been entirely unnecessary. Both understood. That was enough.

Grace Crandall was the first to offer congratulations when the engagement was announced. After her ecstatic rush of comments and declarations, she said shyly: "And now I've something to tell you. Seth Harrington——"

"Oh, I guessed that!"

"You did?" blushing. "But the strange part of it is that he insists I have already accepted him!"

"And haven't you?"

"Not as he says I did. He declares that on the night of mamma's theatre party, when the lights went out, you remember——"

"Yes!" breathed Inez.

"That he spoke to me and kissed my hand, and that I promised to love him!"

Inez stared blankly, her mind in a whirl. The fact that Forbes had really never mentioned that miserable incident occurred to her now with disquieting distinctness.

"How very odd," she murmured at last. "And you have no remembrance of it?"

"Absolutely none."

"Shall you accept him, then?"

Grace dimpled charmingly. "I'm afraid I shall have to do it," she said. "He says I must be true to my promise."

After she had gone Inez pondered a long time. "Oh, it couldn't be!" she cried at length. "I'm sure Owen was the one. He hasn't mentioned it, but——"

Nevertheless, she still wondered.

**Angela Morgan.**

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# A RIVAL'S REVENGE.

**How a Plucky Girl Saved her Lover.**

"Good evening, Dolly! You look prettier than ever, while as for your lips, they seem to ask for kisses. When are you going to—er—honour me"—and a sneer crept about the speaker's mouth—"by becoming my wife?"

The insolence in the man's manner was unmistakable.

"Look you!" replied the girl with flashing eyes. "I have endured your continued persecution quite long enough. If you ever dare to speak to me again in this manner, Dan Davy——" And she paused, as if unwilling to proceed with the threat which was in her mind.

"Well?" said the man scornfully. "What then, my beauty?"

"Then," replied the girl, stung into speech by the mockery of his voice, "then I will tell Mr. Trevor of the way you insult and persecute me!"

"Oh, you will, will you?" A sneer of mingled hatred and contempt distorted the man's evil face, which was now livid with rage. It was clear the name of Jack Trevor had but added oil to the fire of his growing anger.

"Yes," responded the girl vehemently. "And he is man enough to protect me, and, if need be, to call you to account for these insults. You want a lesson, Dan Davy, and you shall have it!"

An angry flush deepened the man's face, while a gleam of defiance shone in his dark eyes. His whole frame trembled with suppressed rage, and his hands clenched involuntarily as if he would have struck her. Controlling himself with an effort, however, he took a step forward, thrusting his evil face close to the girl's until she shrank back affrightedly.

"We shall see!" he said, with a derisive laugh. "Jack Trevor *may* win, but I doubt it—yes, I doubt it!" And he looked meaningly into the girl's dilated eyes.

The threat which these words conveyed to the terrified girl was so full of sinister significance, that she shrank still farther back from the evil face of the man before her, and covered her face with her hands. With a laugh of triumph at the effect his words had produced, Dan Davy turned on his heel and strode rapidly away.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Dolly apprehensively. "What have I done? I am afraid that man meditates some terrible revenge—perhaps not on me, but on Jack. What shall I do? If I tell him, it will make matters worse, for Jack will be very angry. And yet I must warn him, for, if I do not, and anything were to happen to him, I could never forgive myself."

Sorrowfully and in much perplexity the girl went home considering how she could best acquaint her lover with the news of this encounter, and warn him against Dan Davy's possible vindictiveness and treachery.

Jack Trevor and his less successful rival were employed in a large engineering works and iron foundry in the neighbourhood. Davy, who was considered a clever though somewhat idle mechanic, ran the principal boring-machine in the great engineering shop; while Trevor's duty was to drive the huge engine and boiler which set the countless wheels and pulleys of the lathes and other machines which filled the great workshop into motion. Their posts were at some little distance from each other, and, as no good feeling existed between them, they had hitherto, by common consent, studiously avoided one another. The feeling in each man's breast for Dolly Vane had widened the breach between them, and though Jack Trevor felt himself secure in the possession of Dolly's love, he knew the vindictive character of his rival far too well to doubt that he would put into operation any base or contemptible design, which he judged might lead to his own advantage and his rival's discomfiture.

The evening following Dolly's encounter with Dan Davy the girl met her lover.

"Jack," she said, with womanly tact, after they had sat together in silence for some time, "there is something I should like to tell you, but it would make me very unhappy if, by doing so, I became the cause of any act which would lower you in my esteem and make you forget your better self."

"I do not think you need fear that, darling," said Jack, with kindling tenderness in his voice and manner. "Your happiness is ever my first consideration, and all things become subservient to that impulse."

"Then you will promise me, dear Jack," said the girl coaxingly, "that you will not be angry?"

Jack Trevor looked down at the appealing face of the girl at his side and smiled encouragingly into the blue eyes. And so, carefully concealing any personal feeling in the matter and omitting the worst features of the incident altogether, Dolly briefly related her interview with Dan Davy and the fears she entertained that the man premeditated some act of treachery to one or both of them. Jack's honest face flushed with indignation as he listened; but he saw Dolly's face turned to him appealingly, and he restrained any further indication of anger out of sympathy for the girl's evident distress.

"Well, Dolly," he said, after a pause, "the man is a blackguard, and it will be best for you to avoid meeting him as far as possible."

"And you, dear Jack?" inquired the girl, laying her hand appealingly on his.

"I?" responded Trevor. "Well, I shall have a few words to say to Dan Davy to-morrow, but they will be quietly spoken, and you need have no apprehension as to their result. The man is too unmistakably a coward to do aught but snarl."

Dolly felt somewhat relieved by this assurance and earnestly hoped her former misgivings might prove unfounded.

The next day, as the men were crowding out of the great workshop at the close of their day's labour, Jack Trevor put himself in Davy's way.

"I want a word with you," he said briefly.

"You can say it here, then," was the reply.

"It will be better for you, perhaps, if you hear what I have to say where there is a little more privacy," said Trevor significantly.

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"Do you really think so?" sneered Davy. "Well, I think differently. "If you are too great a coward to speak out here, you had better reserve your eloquence for those who appreciate it."

Jack Trevor smiled. He could see that the man who thus taunted him with cowardice was himself actuated by a similar motive in preferring to remain among his fellows.

"Very good!" he said quietly. "I will speak here and now. You have taken upon yourself to insult and persecute a young lady whose name I need not now mention. As I possess the right—do you hear—the right, to protect this young lady from all such unprincipled annoyances, I give you fair and timely warning. If you choose to disregard it, you will have to reckon with me in a much more summary and forcible way than upon this occasion."

There was an ugly gleam in Dan Davy's eyes as this threat was uttered, while his dark face darkened with concentrated rage.

"You are right!" he hissed through his clenched teeth. "The reckoning shall come between us, Jack Trevor, and, to use your own words, 'in a far more summary and forcible way than upon this occasion.' Beware it does not come sooner than you anticipate!"

With another look of malevolent hatred at the form of his rival, Dan Davy strode through the crowd of his fellow-workmen, who had gathered about the disputants with evident curiosity, and was soon lost to view. Jack Trevor, wishing to avoid further question, also made his way out with as little delay as possible. Had he but realised one-half of the sinister significance in Dan Davy's repetition of his own words, the man's murderous thirst for revenge would have filled him with alarm. But he was as yet all unconscious of the implacable vindictiveness of his rival, as well as of the terrible scheme of revenge which he would ere long put into execution.

It was about a month after the incidents just narrated that it was deemed necessary for the speedy completion of a large and important order that Dan Davy should be asked to work throughout the whole of one night at his boring-machine. Jack Trevor would, of course, be obliged to remain also, in order to drive the main engine and thereby supply the machine with its motive power.

There had been no further collision between the two men, and to an ordinary observer the active enmity of a month ago appeared to have subsided into mere indifference and a mutual disinclination to the further cultivation of each other's society. But, if anyone had closely watched Dan Davy's cruel face whenever Jack Trevor passed him or his voice sounded in his ear, he would have found ample testimony of the bitter and implacable hatred which still burnt, like an unquenchable fire, within his breast.

**The girl sawed at the stout rope with the blade of the knife. Would she do it in time?**

It was altogether different with Jack Trevor. Dolly Vane had made no further complaint against Davy; indeed, she had not encountered him since, and Jack, inwardly pleased at what he considered a good result of his timely warning, had allowed his resentment to cool, and merely avoided the man from a natural dislike to his society. Better would it have been for him had his knowledge of the man's character rendered him more watchful of his movements and more ready to meet the danger which threatened him.

The great workshop looked very weird and dark when the men had left. A single electric lamp shed a white gleam of light over the revolving wheels of the long low boring-machine at the far end of the shop. All the rest lay in shadow, the dark, uncouth forms of the motionless machines and lathes looming up through the surrounding gloom like huge fantastic monsters of a bygone age. The great engine was rumbling far down at the other end of the long shop, but no glimmering light revealed its mighty outline, and the throb of its pulsating pistons was the only indication of its whereabouts.

The workshop was deserted, save for the solitary figure of Dan Davy, who stood in the circle of white light which flooded the moving wheels of his machine, and accurately set the long, steel tool grinding its way into the cylinder, which he had firmly bolted on the revolving plate of the machine. Then he gauged the bore with his compasses, and, having satisfied himself that all was going on as he desired, he stood upright and listened.

It was a wild wintry night. Outside, the wind swept along in gusts and the driving rain dashed against the dark panes in the glass roof of the great workshop. Beyond the rumbling engine a door led out into the great open space which backed the dark shops, and here the huge boiler which drove the main engine was embedded in its solid foundation of stout masonry.

Jack Trevor stood before the glowing fire and threw fresh coals into the great red maw of the devouring furnace. A thousand sparks crackled and hissed above the glowing fire as the wet coals fell on the red heart of the hot mass beneath, while a crimson glow shone through the open door of the furnace and illumined the darkness for yards ahead. He closed the iron door with a snap, and put down the shovel he had been using, while the fire roared with increasing fury as the imprisoned gas in the black coal broke its fetters and leapt to meet the darting tongues of flame.

Then he made a very thorough examination of both the steam and water gauges. The former stood high, and a faint hiss of escaping steam came from the end of the black arm of the safety-valve. The latter was low, and, as the boiler was not a self-feeder, he turned on the water-cock until he had sufficiently increased its supply. For a few moments the steam pressure abated, but fresh steam was soon generated, and the

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hand of the steam-gauge began once more to ascend and the steam to hiss more vehemently from its escape.

"She's all right," muttered Jack. "It's a comfort to see something warm a night like this. I'm not over fond of rain, but it's better to stand in it out here by the fire than to take shelter in that gloomy old shop." He lit his pipe as he mused with a straw which he lit on the red ashes under the glowing fire.

He did not see a dark form creeping along the side of the masonry in which the boiler was embedded—a form that moved stealthily and carried in its hand a long, black iron bar.

"I wonder where Dolly is," he muttered. "Safe in bed, I hope, for it must be nearing twelve o'clock. Dear little Dolly! I'm glad that villain has kept out of her way lately! Well, Dolly dear," and he straightened himself as he spoke, and took his pipe from his lips, "if things go all right, as I have every reason to believe they will, we'll be married in the spring."

There was a swift, rushing sound, as of something cleaving the air. A sudden shock seemed to strike Jack Trevor, a great darkness came before his eyes, and he sank like a stone upon the iron plate which covered the ground in front of the great boiler.

When he came to himself it was to feel ice-cold water dashing in his face. Vainly he tried to recall all that had taken place before he fell, struck down by that fatal blow; his brain reeled with the effort. He could see someone before him, and instinctively knew it was Dan Davy. What puzzled him was that he was now on his feet, and yet had no power to move. The reason, however, was not far to seek. It was barely half an hour since his enemy had dealt him that terrible blow, but in that half-hour Dan Davy had not been idle.

Close to the front of the huge boiler, a massive square post was embedded in the ground. This post had formerly been surmounted by a bell, which used to ring out the hour for commencing work as well as the meal-hours, of the men in the different workshops of the firm, but latterly a steam-whistle had been attached to the boiler for this purpose, and, though the bell had been removed, the post still stood in its accustomed place.

The very moment that Jack Trevor had fallen senseless to the ground, his villainous assailant had dragged him to this post, and, lifting him upon his feet, he pinioned the inanimate form of his victim to the post by means of a leather machine-belt which he tore from one of the lathes for the purpose. To make him still more secure, he had nailed the coils of the belt to the back of the post, so that no one could possibly have released himself unaided from such all-powerful fetters.

Slowly—very slowly—consciousness returned to the stricken man, and he gazed in a bewildered way about him. Dan Davy stood with his back to the boiler, eyeing his victim with a savage gleam of wild ferocity in his dark eyes. He laughed derisively as he met Jack's bewildered gaze.

"In a more summary and forcible way than upon this occasion," he said, with a gesture of triumph. "Your own words, Jack Trevor, and for once you spoke the truth. Marry her in the spring, will you? Ha, ha! She'll have to collect the pieces first. You have had your innings, my fine fellow, and now I'm having mine, and I reckon," he added, with a demoniacal laugh, "that this is the end of the match. Now you are curious to know what I am going to do next. Well, watch me, and you will see!"

He flung open the iron door of the furnace, and threw shovelful after shovelful of fresh coals upon the glowing fire within till it roared and raged above the strong draught like a thing of life. Then, catching up a rope which lay near him, he threw one end over the long arm of the safety-valve, and, drawing both ends down with a sudden jerk, bound them securely about the big brass cocks on the front of the boiler. The steam was still hissing softly from the escape, but, as the pressure tightened on the arm of the valve, it was driven back and fettered in its steel bonds. Then the swarthy figure of Dan Davy turned, and, folding his arms across his breast, laughed demoniacally at his helpless victim.

"I think you will do now, Jack Trevor," he said, his eyes blazing with fiendish triumph. "Before an hour has gone by the boiler will have shifted from its present position, and you, in all probability, will go with it. Good-bye, my fine fellow! A safe journey to you to the other world!" And, with another ringing laugh, he went down the long lane between the shops and out into the deserted streets.

Still dazed as he was by the blow he had received, Jack Trevor realised in a flash the terrible purpose of his enemy. Indeed, if instinct had not revealed to him the truth, the low warning hum which came from the great boiler within five minutes of Dan Davy's retreat would have told him all too plainly what he had to expect. Without the chance of escape, the fast-increasing volume of steam must, ere long, burst its steel bonds, and hurl both him and the mighty boiler to instant destruction.

Louder and louder in his ears grew the hum in the great mass of metal as the generating steam protested against its enforced imprisonment. Jack Trevor exerted his utmost strength to burst the bonds which held him, until his face grew purple with the terrible tension of nerve and muscle, and the great drops stood upon his forehead, but all his efforts were of no avail. There was no hope, save in a speedy death.

The warning voice of the fettered steam grew. The hum had risen to a deep, sonorous vibration, which swallowed up all other sound. It could not be long now. Deliverance, he knew, was almost impossible, for the workshops stood in a great plot of deserted land at the extreme end of a dark and little-frequented road which had no outlet.

The helpless man awaited his certain end with as much composure as he could summon to his aid. The steam now began to pound against the steel casing of its prison with loud, imperative throbs of pent-up vitality. Jack looked at the steam-gauge, and a groan escaped him as he saw the hand that indicated the pressure had long since passed the figure at which the great boiler had been tested. Now every additional pound meant new and increasing danger for the fettered man.

The wind still blew with great violence, but the rain had ceased to descend. With one last prayer, Jack Trevor resigned himself to the awful doom which awaited him, as his head sank upon his breast in hopeless despair. At that instant a figure darted round the end of the long dark workshop and stood by his side. The man uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Dolly!" he gasped.

"What is it?" said the girl breathlessly. "Oh, you are bound to the post! Let me release you. I knew you were in danger!" She went towards him as she spoke for the purpose of removing his bonds.

"Stop!" cried Jack hoarsely. "Go away instantly, or you will be blown to pieces. Never mind me. I have no chance of escape now, for it is too late. But save yourself—quick!"

The girl turned and looked at the great roaring boiler. For the first time she realised the terrible danger which threatened them. Then she turned again to Jack.

"I will not go," she said firmly. "If you will not tell me how to save you, I will die with you!"

The man's face grew white as he read the determination in her eyes.

"Come here, then," he said hoarsely. "Do as I bid you, and may God help us! Take the big clasp knife from my right pocket and try to sever that rope which holds the safety-valve down. Do not lose a moment!"

The girl obeyed, and a moment of terrible suspense followed, during which she sawed at the stout rope with the blade of the knife. Would she do it in time? The man held his breath as he waited. Suddenly a great noise filled the air—a mighty roar that deafened the ears and numbed the brain. At first Jack thought their hour had come, but, while the noise still continued, he still remained unhurt. And then he

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realised that Dolly had saved him from death, for a great volume of blinding steam was pouring from the escape, and the indicating hand of the pressure-gauge was rapidly travelling back to its accustomed position.

"Thank God!" he muttered brokenly. "Dolly, we are saved!"

The girl came up to him where he stood, fettered to the great post, and kissed him rapturously, with the tears in her blue eyes. Then she began to undo the belt which held her lover to the post, drawing out the nails which fastened the belt to the wood by means of a chisel which Jack had directed her to find. When at last he was free, he took her in his arms and asked—

"How was it, Dolly, that you came here?"

A serious look came into the girl's eyes.

"It seems almost miraculous," she said in a low voice. "I had gone to bed and had fallen asleep, but I had such a terrible dream that I awoke with a start. The dream was so horrible and vivid that I could not go to sleep again, so I rose and sat by the window of my little room. I was thinking of you, working all through the long dark night, for one of the men had told me you and Davy were to remain. Presently I saw a man running along the road. When he reached our house he stopped, and, looking up at my window, shook his clenched hands above his head, and laughed so terribly that I shrank back. He could not see me, I knew, but I could plainly discern his features in the light of the gas-lamp which stood near. It was Dan Davy. At first I was bewildered, and then something seemed to tell me you were in danger. I tried to argue the thought down, but it only grew within me, and I made up my mind, helpless woman as I was, to come here and see."

"And you came just in time, dear," said Jack, drawing her towards him in fervent gratitude. "You have saved my life, Dolly, and at the risk of your own."

The girl looked happily into the face of her lover.

"Now let us go home," she said. "I am cold. You must find that terrible man, who, but for the intervention of Providence, would have been your murderer, for he must be punished. Now take me to my home, and come and see me in the morning."

And he did so with a light step and proud heart, since his life was even more than of yore in the hands of his beautiful Dolly. But the man who had planned his murder had already met his punishment, for, in the morning, they found him a raving maniac, wandering about the fields on the outskirts of the town. And thus the frustrated revenge of an unscrupulous rival only served to still further cement the bond of love between Jack Trevor and his fair rescuer, and, as so often happens, even in this world, out of evil came good.

**Walter J. Mowbray.**

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"Cordelia is selling everything to go abroad again." "She is?" "Yes; she offered to sell me her bicycle and her engagement to Mr. Jimp."

"Saw you on a weighing machine this afternoon," said the Funny Man. "Were you thinking of suicide?" "Suicide?" repeated the other man. "Yes; doing a weigh with yourself."

"I've a great story to tell you, chaps," said a man to a group at the club. "I don't think any of you ever heard me tell it before." "Is it a really good one?" asked one of the party doubtfully. "It certainly is." "Then you never told it before," chorused the crowd.

"I thought," said Dawkins, "that you said you didn't think much of Bradbury as a pianist, and here you have taken a box for his recital." "I didn't know," answered Morely, "a better way to show my contempt for him as a musician than by taking a box, and leaving it empty on the evening of his recital."


# £5 A WEEK FOR LIFE!

## In Addition to £1,000 in Cash.

*THE MOST LIBERAL PRIZE EVER OFFERED BY ANY PERIODICAL IN THE WORLD.*

**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** is so huge that it is almost impossible for one to realise at first thought what it really means. Therefore the following hints will probably enable you to grasp the full value of such a regular income:

**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** means, unless you are extravagant, absolute freedom from money troubles as long as you live.

**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** is an insurance against depression and mental worry.

**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** will enable you to dispense charity with a liberal hand.

**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** will buy you a bigger house and enable you to live in better style.

**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** will cover the cost of taking a cottage in the country and living there in comfort for the rest of your days.

**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** will pay the expenses of months of foreign travel.

**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** will buy anything you can possibly want, from a piano to a motor-car.

If you want to set up in business you would soon have enough capital by saving the **£5** every week for a time—

In Six Months you would have ..... **£130**
In Twelve Months you would have ..... **£260**
In Two Years you would have ..... **£520**

In fact, there is no limit to the things you can do with **£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE.**

***THE prize will be paid to the person (perhaps you) who correctly solves a number of pictures which appear in PEARSON'S WEEKLY, under the conditions printed in that paper.***

***Each picture consists of certain objects, the names of which represent the name of a railway station in the United Kingdom. For example, the hull of a ship would mean "Hull." Every name will be found in Bradshaw's Railway Guide.***

A further sum of **£1,000 in cash** will be distributed as consolation gifts amongst those who come next to the first winner in the following manner:—

## FIRST CONSOLATION GIFT, £100.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2nd Cash Gift | ... ... ... ... ... ... | £50 |
| 3rd | ,, ... ... ... ... ... ... | £50 |
| 4th | ,, ... ... ... ... ... ... | £25 |
| 5th | ,, ... ... ... ... ... ... | £25 |
| 6th | ,, ... ... ... ... ... ... | £25 |
| 7th | ,, ... ... ... ... ... ... | £25 |
| 8th to 57th Cash Gifts | ... ... ... ... ... | £10 each |
| 58th to 97th | ,, ... ... ... ... ... | £5 each |

So you see, even if you do not succeed in securing the first prize of **£5 a Week for Life** *(which will be paid under any circumstances)*, you have a good opportunity of securing one of the cash gifts.

# £5 a Week for Life!

### Cards Will Soon be Out.

"I feel lost here in all this noise and hurry of London." "If 'findings is keepings,' Miss Fairmount, I'll head a search party."

### Better Allow It Now.

Miss Homely: "Do you think I ought to permit Jack to kiss me before we are married?" Miss Beauty: "Yes, unless you prefer never to be kissed."

### A Gentle Hint.

He (sympathetically): "You have a bad cold?" She (huskily): "I have. I am so hoarse that if you attempted to kiss me I couldn't even scream."

### No Change About Him.

"Dearest," she murmured, "I'm so afraid you'll change." "Darling," he answered, "you'll never find any change about me." Which was painfully true in a double sense.

### Not Spent So Much.

"But, Bertha, it was only last month that I paid a dressmaker's bill of £12, and here is another this month for £10." "Well, dear Edgar, that shows, you see, that I am beginning to spend less."

### Why Not the Lips?

"My queen," exclaimed her adorer timidly, "may I kiss the royal hand?" "My faithful subject," replied the young woman, with the air of one gently chiding him, "what is the matter with the royal lips?"

### His Ideal.

"No," said the fair girl, "it's no use. You don't come up to my ideal." "Perhaps not," he answered. "But I don't care if I can only get anywhere near my own." "Your own?" she answered. "What is your ideal?" "You," he whispered.

### Making the Home Club-like.

Wife: "There, dear, here are all the magazines, here are whisky and soda and a box of your favourite cigars, and the papers. If you want anything else, just ring the bell." Husband: "What on earth is the matter?" "Nothing. I merely wanted to make your home as club-like as possible."

### Where They Really Wandered.

"Why do women so often wander so aimlessly in the murky solicitudes of the dead past, brooding over days for ever gone?" asked a young lady of a marrying widower. "They don't, I think," he said. "Rather they wander, especially at this season, in the drapers' shops of the present, often pricing articles which they have not the remotest intention of buying."

### He Was a Campanologist.

"Did you hear of that Manchester man who was engaged to seventeen young ladies at the same time?" asked the small girl. "Yes," replied her cousin—"quite a campanologist, was he not?" "I—er—don't think I quite understand." "Pardon me; I should have said he was quite a ringer of belles."

### She Liked Herself Next.

May: "Next to a man, what's the jolliest thing you know of?" Ethel: "Myself, if he's nice."

### It Might be Risky.

Miss Huggins: "My father is very good at reading faces." Mr. Kissam: "Then I had better not print any kisses here."

### The Unit of Measurement.

Mr. Hiborn: "By what unit of measurement could you properly estimate a man's devotion to you?" Miss Lowe: "The carat."

### Poor Bashful Man.

The Bashful Lover: "Miss Emily, I—er—hem!" She (sweetly): "Do you, Mr. Mammasdear? Now, wouldn't you like to join our sewing class?"

### She Could Afford to.

The Heiress: "Am I the only girl in the whole wide world you love?" He: "No, dear; but you are the only girl I know who could afford to marry me."

### Hope Isn't Satisfying.

He: "Then I may live upon hope until next Sunday evening?" She: "Oh, poor fellow, is it as bad as that? Here, I'll lend you enough to buy a meal."

### Not Had Time Yet.

"I just saw Miss Crœsus go into the conservatory with that Italian nobleman. Are they engaged?" "Oh, I hardly think so as yet. Give her fifteen minutes more."

### Nest-Hunting.

"I dearly love birds," he gently sighed. And then what did she do but hasten to the open piano and softly begin singing, "I wish I were a bird." They are looking for a nest now.

### Looking Ahead.

Algy: "They want six thousand pounds for the lease, Maria. It runs for eighty-nine years." Maria: "Well, don't buy it, Algy! Only eighty-nine years! Fancy dear baby being turned out of his house at ninety-one, and possibly infirm into the bargain!"

### Not His Fault.

She: "Do you remember how you said, when you were courting me, that if I would marry you I would have nothing to do all my days but sit about and look pretty? And how different it is now!" He: "Well, it isn't my fault if you can't look pretty any more."

### Couldn't Speak for Her.

Miss Kissam: "You seem depressed to-night, Mr. Dexter." Mr. Dexter: "Yes, I am. I went to a fortune-teller to-day to find out my fate, and was told that the girl I loved would not marry me." Miss Kissam: "But, Mr. Dexter, no fortune-teller is authorised to speak for me."

### No Romance Left.

"Yes—I gave him up," sighed the young woman. "Did he prove unworthy of your affection?" inquired her sympathetic friend. "He—he became a spelling reformer," replied the other, with a shudder, "and signed his name 'Jorj.' It took all the poetry and romance out of the name, and so we parted."

### Learnt a Lesson.

"I shall say nothing about this to anybody," said the young woman, attempting to soften the blow, "and I need not add that there is no occasion for you, either, to repeat it." "Repeat it!" echoed the rejected lover bitterly. "No! I shall never propose to another girl because of her pretty doll face as long as I live!"

### Had Sent it to Him.

Mr. Le Jecks: "Well, Miss Coldcash, I suppose you received a good many birthday cards?" Miss Coldcash (sweetly): "Oh, yes; and there was one particularly dainty and artistic. I am sure it came from you." Mr. Le Jecks (delighted): "What makes you think so?" Miss Coldcash: "Because I sent it to you on your last birthday."

# The Hobbies of George Mitchell.

***

**A Pathetic Story of the Winning of a Woman's Love.**

***

Little George Mitchell had made his money—piles of it—in tallow; and what was worse, he *looked* as if he had!

He didn't drop his aitches exactly, and he had on the whole passable manners; he could even manufacture an inoffensive and grammatical after-dinner speech if he was put to it. But nothing—not the best tailor in London, not the biggest mansion in Park Lane—could make anything of him but a respectable tradesman.

It was his appearance that most strongly betrayed the "risen" man. He had a common neck; and a certain droop of his shoulders and the shape of his hands seemed to say "Business! business! business!" almost as if they spoke aloud. His redeeming feature was a pair of great brown eyes, that reminded one of a faithful Newfoundland dog.

The world of fashion laughed at him, but took him up more or less, because—well, because nowadays it can't afford to sneeze at a private yacht and the best hunters in Great Britain.

It happened while he was making his grand tour that he ran across his fate in the person of the Woman. It was in India that they met. She lived with her father at an out-of-the-way little up-country station. She was beautiful, of course, with the cold, disdainful, passionless type of beauty that is to some men so instantaneously fatal.

It didn't take George Mitchell long—slow of perception as he was about some things—to understand the nature of affairs at the La Mothes' bungalow.

The Colonel's hand was a trifle too shaky at breakfast, and his face a trifle too flushed by the evening, to hide the family skeleton for very long from a visitor. In a short time he took to watching his daughter out of the way, and to pouring querulous plaints into George's ear with regard to pecuniary difficulties, of which he seemed to have a vast collection.

George listened stolidly. He listened also to tedious yarns of the Colonel's poor but aristocratic relations who would do nothing for him—of ancient estates heavily encumbered—of a titled but impecunious brother who could only give him good advice; and he turned things over in his mind and came at length to a conclusion. He stayed at the station for three weeks. There was a ruined temple near that he'd come a thousand miles out of his way to see; and before he left he'd taken the most serious step of all commonplace successful life.

He had laid his stubby hand reverently and timidly upon the fragile fingers of the Colonel's daughter, and he had said very simply and very diffidently:

"You're not happy here, Miss La Mothe. This life jars on you; and you are, if you will forgive me for saying so, so dreadfully poor. Will you let me try to make up to you for it all in the future? Will you be my wife?"

Zoe La Mothe wasn't surprised. She had seen something of the kind looming for days, and she had awaited it with a sort of numb contempt.

"I don't love you," she said slowly; not, however, removing her hand—"but you know that, of course. You have been awfully kind to us, and your offer is a great temptation. I've always longed to be rich, and—and as you have seen, there is nothing to attract me to my present life. If you are really content to take me on my own terms, I will do my best to be—dutiful."

"You—you care for no one else?" he asked quickly.

Miss La Mothe shrugged her shapely shoulders. "I have such a large selection to choose from here," she said bitterly. "A few raw subalterns, a decrepit major, and a doctor who is to be married next month. No, there is no one else."

"Then," said the man of tallow; "I am satisfied."

A year later the shaky Colonel got three months leave, and brought his daughter to England; and by an effort scraped together hard cash to get her a respectable trousseau, and left her thankfully in the hands of the tallow-maker. In return, the tallow-maker paid his father-in-law's debts, gave him some rugged homely advice as to the cause of his shakiness, and left him with a bundle of banknotes in his pocket-book and the tears of the habitual inebriate in his eyes.

Zoe Mitchell did her best to be a dutiful wife at first, but she and her husband had not a single thing in common. His looks provoked her, his ways irritated her; and to see "Mitchell's Superfine Candles" on London hoardings invariably sent her back to Park Lane with a headache.

Gradually she began to go *her* way, and slowly *he* crept back to his. She was a cultured woman, and she collected about her a cultured set. The tallow-maker was not cultured; indeed, he had much ado not to appear absolutely illiterate. And so it came to pass that she grew more and more ashamed of him, and consequently they saw very little of one another. "The beautiful Mrs. Mitchell with the impossible husband" friends—*her* friends—called her. To do her bare justice she really believed that George Mitchell was happy enough in his own way. He never complained. He'd lots of hobbies—queer, plebeian hobbies—that she vaguely imagined quite filled his life; and when at intervals they did meet, he was always perfectly cheerful.

She didn't know that "The beautiful Mrs. Mitchell with the impossible husband" was as familiar a term to him as to her. No, she did not know, because "the impossible husband" was a man who did not easily show his feelings.

But suddenly, one evening, quite by accident, she came across a very different phase of his impossibility—a sinister phase—and it aroused her to something even more than interest in him—to red-hot, shaking indignation.

They were down at their seat in Brackenshire—together, for a wonder—and the valet, who, like all the servants, was fond, in a patronising way, of little George Mitchell—approached Mrs. Mitchell deferentially as she was sweeping in to dinner.

"My master doesn't feel well, ma'am. He's gone to bed. These are his keys. He begs you will look in the third drawer of his desk after dinner, and bring him a packet of private papers tied with red tape, and marked on the outside with a red ink cross."

Mrs. Mitchell slightly raised her pencilled eyebrows as she took the keys. "Tell your master I will do as he wishes," she said carelessly and passed on.

It was a rare chance, indeed, that took her into George's private study. Trade journals were to be found there that disagreed with her, and neat piles of methodically filed bills that spoke of the banality of the counting house. And, worst of all, standing on the mantelshelf, was a photograph of George's late mother. Even the well-trained servants giggled

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over *that*. She was a fat, vulgar-looking old woman with an improbable cap, and a broad, homely smile; George thought her beautiful!

Mrs. Mitchell dawdled over dinner, and pondered somewhat. She had not asked anyone in to share the meal—she didn't as a rule when George was at home. As it turned out, she might have done so, for now he was poorly, it seemed. She had never known him poorly before. She hoped to goodness he wasn't going to be ill; illness in a house is a great nuisance, she reflected irritably; but probably after all it was only a bad cold.

She finished her last grape slowly, and rose with a rather impatient sigh.

Instead of going to her own boudoir or to the drawing-room, she proceeded to the study, and, still wrapped in thought, she found the third drawer of the desk, fitted the key, and opened it. It was full of business papers duly docketed and tied with variously coloured tape. She selected her packet, and was about to close the drawer, when she noticed, thrust back into a corner, a bundle of private letters. The envelopes were small and softly tinted, and they were bound together with a piece of white satin ribbon. What particularly attracted Mrs. Mitchell's eye was the newness of the paper—the letters looked as if they had only just been put there. One usually associates ribbon-bound correspondence with envelopes yellow with age and fragrant with musk and memories; these were aggressively fresh.

Half mechanically she took them out and turned them over in her hands. They were in a woman's writing—writing not unlike her own. The dates on the post-marks were recent.

Mrs. Mitchell, despite her aristocratic lineage, was particularly correct in her ideas. She went her own way, it is true, but it was a spotless and respectable way.

What were another woman's letters doing in the desk of the man she had married? Her heart began to beat uncomfortably; instinctively her white fingers twitched at the ribbon. After all, she had a right to know George Mitchell's secrets, if anyone had. Was it possible that this man—this little commoner, whom she called husband—had been capable of some vulgar intrigue? She had fancied till now that she knew the worst of him; she had thought of him hitherto as a simple, good-natured little plebeian, but was he also a knave? She flushed scarlet with indignation and wounded pride. Rapidly and angrily, without giving herself time for reflection, she undid the ribbon and opened the letter at the top of the little pile.

There was no address on the sheet. "My own Darling," it began, as if the writer had been too anxious to pour out her soul to trouble about such mundane things as addresses. It ran on for four pages, and was full of tenderness that somehow made the reader intangibly envious. There was nothing in it that could betray the writer's identity—it was just a fond, foolish letter, and it was merely signed "Your own little girl."

With a deeper flush dyeing her cheek, and her white teeth pressed hard on to her lower lip, she tossed it down and took up another. This spoke of devotion, even greater than the first; and again she turned it over eagerly, hoping to see some signature that would, at least, give her a clue.

"Your loving wife," was what she read.

A horrible fear darted into Mrs. Mitchell's heart.

His wife! George Mitchell's wife! What did it mean? What could it mean? Had the tallow-maker saved her drunken father from bankruptcy and given her luxury and wealth under false pretences? Was she only his tool and dupe? His wife in name, perhaps, when—the idea was too appalling! She dropped breathlessly into a chair, gathered all the letters up, and set herself to read them through from beginning to end.

They were all much in the same strain—breathing of the passionate, tender love of a woman for a man, carrying Zoe Mitchell into an atmosphere she could not understand or appreciate; and they ended abruptly, except for some scribbled pet-name. They weren't written by a lady; there were little tricks of speech which betrayed them; but it was obvious throughout that she who had penned them loved George Mitchell to distraction, and believed herself to be his lawful wife—which was worse.

It was obvious, too, that she knew of no rival in the field.

There were little pathetic touches about being his first and last love, and of the happy times they had spent together, and were still to spend.

Zoe Mitchell didn't attempt to understand or to analyse; only a sudden contemptuous pity took possession of her—pity for the unknown woman, who, like herself, had been fooled by an illiterate hypocrite of a man.

She finished the last of the packet, and her breast heaved with the intensity of her wrath and mortification.

Acting on impulse, she picked up the stray sheets, and walked rapidly out of the study and upstairs to her husband's bedroom.

Without waiting to knock, she pushed open the door and passed straight to his side.

George Mitchell was sitting up in bed supported by pillows; his face was a strange livid hue—his breath was coming harshly; but she noticed none of these signs.

"I want an explanation," she began in the low, concentrated tone of intense and bitter anger. "I ought to have asked for it before, it seems."

His eyes which had lighted a little at her entrance, grew dull again.

He raised one hand feebly in protest.

"Can't explanations — wait?" he whispered. "I wanted you; I have some important work to do—I am not well."

"Well or ill," she cried harshly; "I intend to know the meaning of these"—she held out the letters to him. "Who is this creature?" she asked rapidly. "Why does she call herself your *wife*?"

He did not answer; only he looked at her beseechingly.

"*Who* wrote them?" she persisted with increasing rage; "I *insist* on knowing."

He stretched out his hand and took the bundle of notes from her and laid them on the bed, turning them over and over with fond, feeble fingers. There was a half smile on his face as he did so.

"Do you mean to answer me?" she demanded icily. "Are you *afraid*?"

The taunt in her last words roused him.

"No," he said, looking up at her suddenly; "no, I am not afraid. I have nothing to be afraid of, because—because *I wrote them myself!*"

She shrank back a step, as if she thought he had taken leave of his senses.

"*You?*—what do you mean? Is this some senseless subterfuge? If so——"

"No, it isn't," he interrupted gently, and his pale cheeks flushed a little; "I did write them—I did indeed, Zoe. It doesn't matter now what you know. You see, I loved you so—so tremendously, and I did so long for a bit of love in return. I'm not blaming you, my dear—don't think so. I knew it couldn't be, of course. You were straight with me from the first, and you never pretended it could. But I've always been a queer, fanciful sort of fellow, though I don't look it—I used to think and ponder over just what I'd like you to say, supposing—supposing you *could* have cared, you know; and then I took to writing it down, and I tried to copy your hand, just to fancy how loving words would have looked in it;

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I know how foolish all this must sound." He glanced at her apologetically.

"Go on," she said in a dry, strangled voice; "go on."

"I got more and more silly," he proceeded nervously; "and I used to write letters and post them to myself, and try to imagine—especially when you were away, as you generally were—that they came from you. You'd be surprised how getting them used to hearten me up. I've known my pulses leap and jump when I've seen one of those envelopes on the breakfast table, and for a bit I'd half believe that it really *did* come from you. Of course, it was ridiculous and childish, but I took to keeping them, and——"

"Stop," she cried, and it was an exceeding bitter cry. "Oh, stop."

She sank down on her knees, and took one of the rugged hands in both her own, bending her hot face over it in an agony of remorse and shame.

"What *must* you think of me? Oh, what must you think of me?" she whispered.

The little tallow-maker was terribly distressed.

"Don't, dear," he repeated again and again; "don't! What do I think of you, do you say? Why, exactly what I always have thought—that next to my mother you are the most beautiful and wonderful woman on this earth—and the best. I'm not blaming *you* for anything, Zoe; don't think for a moment that I am. You have nothing to reproach yourself with."

He tried to raise her head, but the effort made him pant.

"George," she breathed, looking up at him all at once with swimming, startled eyes, and for the moment forgetting herself; "you're very ill. What's the matter with you? What can I do?"

"Don't you trouble, dear," he said huskily. "It's a chill of some sort, I think. I've sent Benson for the lawyer, for somehow I feel as if I wasn't coming out of it, and I want to make everything right for you afterwards. I ought to have done it at the time of our marriage, but I kept putting it off."

"But a *doctor?*" she demanded in sharp, horrified surprise; "haven't you sent for a doctor?"

"I didn't think it was much use," he said meekly. "I've been feeling queer for a long time now, off and on, and I think this must be the finish."

She read his face with penetrating, anguished eyes.

"You don't care to live?" she said in a stricken tone; "you think I don't *want* you?"

He did not answer, but instead, he fidgeted evasively with the bedclothes.

"George," she cried passionately, standing up beside his bed, very tall and white and determined; "you shall *not* die. Do you hear me? You shall *not*."

It was a terrible struggle—so terrible that three great specialists shooks their head more than once. On an already weakened constitution double pneumonia with complications is apt to be a desperately serious matter.

"But with a nurse like that wife of his," they said, "his friends will, at least, have the satisfaction of knowing that no single stone has been left unturned."

And gradually—very gradually—there dawned in George Mitchell's darkened room the first will-o-the-wisp ray of hope. And in due course—only it was a long and weary business—he did creep back to life; but it was a very frail ghost of him that leant for the first time on his wife's arm after months of desperate suffering.

* * * * *

And once again "the beautiful Mrs. Mitchell with the impossible husband" became the topic of comment in Society, just as they had been in the first days of their married life.

"She's posing as positively *fond* of that little horror, if you please!" said Lady Ponsonby de Darrell to her particular friend. "I know all the La Mothes well, and I always said, my dear, that they were a little *mad*. Why, Enid, tells me that when Zoe ran down for the inside of a week to Elva Fletcher's wedding, she absolutely wrote to her chandler every day! Can you imagine anything more absurd?"

**Chris Sewell.**

# Your Editor Chats.

## OUR NEW SERIES.

Last week I promised to tell you something about a new series of articles which will shortly start in this paper. The circumstances under which it was written equal in interest those under which "The Confessions of Cynthia" and "How I Chaperoned Belinda" were put into manuscript. This series, however, is quite different from the previous ones, inasmuch as the chief character in the story is the person who writes the series.

Everyone has heard of the "self-made man," but few people have heard of the "self-made girl." This series deals with "The Confessions of a Self-Made Girl." It is really the story of a girl living in a country village who is filled with a desire to make a name for herself in the world, and therefore comes to London, practically penniless, and by her beauty and brains builds up for herself a great name.

The series will be a short one, and will be followed by another series absolutely different from anything which has already appeared. Society and its doings will be left for a time, and fresh ground broken. "The Confessions of a Self-Made Girl" begin in *Short Stories* for March 7th.

## OUR NEW SERIAL.

Our new serial has been specially written for us by Mr. R. Norman Silver, whose previous tales—"The Golden Dwarf," "Tales Told Off Duty," and other stories—are well known to the readers of this paper.

The opening instalment, which will be a very big one, crammed with striking situations, will appear in *Short Stories* for March 7th.

## OUR NEW COMPETITION.

The preparations for starting this competition are now practically complete, and I am sure, when you see it, that it will strike you as being one of the most delightful and profitable forms of recreation yet devised. The prize will be a cash one, and the time occupied in doing the competition will not interfere with the time you may presently occupy in other competitions. This competition will start in *Short Stories* for March 7th.

So you see altogether that *Short Stories* for March 7th will be a bumper number, and that it will be crammed from cover to cover with startling prizes and splendid fiction.

There will be a very great rush on that issue, and it will be advisable for you as the time draws near just to give your newsagent a hint that he must keep your copy for you, otherwise he might be inclined to sell it to anyone who may rush in before you have time to get round.

**Your Editor.**

***The winner of the £10 offered in the third "Dayton" Competition is Mr. J. Willcock, 72 Kirglake Street, Liverpool.***

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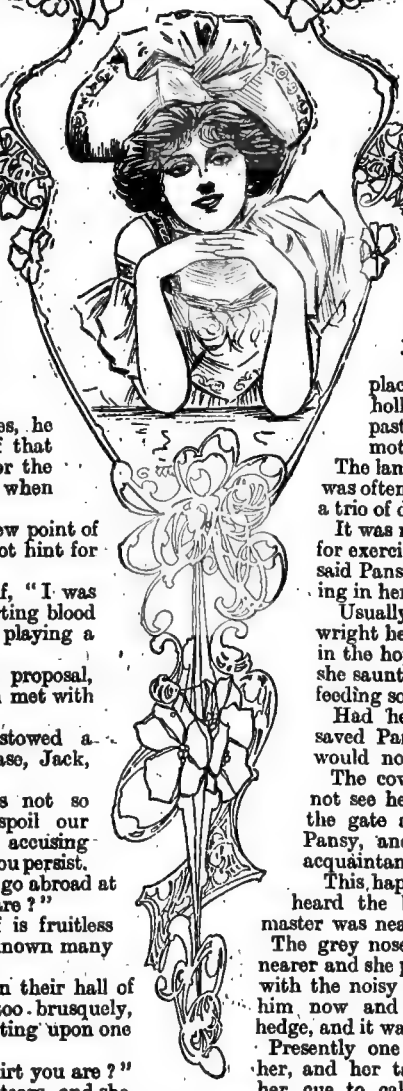
# Love's Last Laugh.



## The Tale of a Country Courtship.

It was only a question of weeks, possibly months. You will guess, if you read a little way, and the details of the matter are of small concern to the world.

Still, Tom Morleigh was far from thinking that Pansy was as good as his, although he had reached her heart, as he thought a long way.

Like most of his gender in such cases, he revelled for a while in the placid belief that when the time came she would be his for the asking. The shock of disillusion came when he offered his hand.

Her prompt rejection gave him a new point of view in regard to women, but it did not hint for a moment that the cause was lost.

"It's the old story," he told himself, "I was too sure." The incident stirred his sporting blood and made him resolve to win her by playing a stronger game.

In due season there came a second proposal, and a third came in quick order. Each met with a definite negative.

Upon the second sally Pansy bestowed a charitable smile, and remarked: "Please, Jack, don't be silly."

The next time he tried it she was not so patient. "You seem determined to spoil our Summer," she said, as though she were accusing him of a black conspiracy. "Really, if you persist, there is nothing for mamma and I but to go abroad at once. Have you any idea how rude you are?"

One of the tasks a man soon tires of is fruitless proposing. Romance and reality have known many noble exceptions.

Morleigh was not cut out for a seat in their hall of fame. He answered her last question too brusquely, of course, but love and hate are ever waiting upon one another.

"Have you any idea what a heartless flirt you are?" were his words. It was Pansy's cue for tears, and she took it copiously, making the while a hurried exit, or rather an entrance through the French window.

Morleigh remained standing on the verandah a moment, and, thanks to his changing point of view, took new heart. He began to pat himself for his keen penetration.

"Those tears are all right," he said, gleefully. "I'll have another go."

The day came, and he looked in at "Elmwood," but the maid, with blighting alacrity, announced that Miss Arkwright was not in.

As she said it, a man's laugh that he knew well and detested plagued his ear. It came loudly, aggressively, it seemed to him, from the dining-room.

"Even that silly ape would not sit and guffaw to himself," he reasoned. "Of course she's with him."

Despite the new eyes with which he had begun to survey womankind, the outlook seemed serious, even hopeless. He climbed into his trap and drove down the avenue of elms, convinced that he was cast for the *role* of one who had loved and lost.

"And that bounder wins! By Jove! It isn't right at all! What in thunder does she see in him?" and more of this tenor until he drove into his own stable-yard and threw the reins to his man.

A fine grove of firs at the east end of his place was bordered by a lane high hedged with holly. On its other side stretched the level pasture lands that belonged to Pansy's mother.

The lane wound its way to the sea shore, and Jack was often seen there in the days that followed with a trio of dogs frolicking about him.

It was remarkable how often he took those dogs for exercise and a bath since the day that the maid said Pansy was not in and he heard the ape laughing in her drawing-room.

Usually he kept an eye cocked over the Arkwright hedge—one had to be pretty tall for that—in the hopes of seeing her, for it was in that field she sauntered now and then, when the cows were feeding somewhere else.

Had he looked to-day as usual he would have saved Pansy a big fright, but their engagement would not have been announced so soon.

The cowman was the primary cause. He did not see her in that field, of course, when he opened the gate and let in the cattle; but the cows saw Pansy, and straightway approached to make her acquaintance.

This happened at about the moment that Pansy heard the bark of Jack's dogs, and knew that the master was near at hand.

The grey noses and swishing tails came nearer and nearer and she pressed closer to the hedge, moving along with the noisy dogs on the other side. She could see him now and again through a narrow opening in the hedge, and it was good to know that he was there.

Presently one of the bold Jerseys was walking beside her, and her tail almost brushed her back. This was her cue to call for help, even upon a man who had bored her with silly proposals.

"Jack," she cried.

He started and caught a glimpse of her blue skirts between the hedge rifts.

"Jack!" came her voice again. "I am—I am at home to-day. Won't you look in—jump in—over the hedge—quick—I've something to tell you."

It was an impossible leap, but there are more things than locksmiths that love laughs at. One is a holly hedge when the man is determined and is not afraid of torn clothes and a scratched face.

The dogs managed to dash through with him, pell-mell, and had a fine chase after the Jersey, who took to her heels at this rude interruption of her friendly *tête-à-tête* with the maid.

Somehow, their engagement was understood from that moment, and he did not have to bore her by proposing. So you were right in guessing from the way Pansy carried on at the outset that it was only a matter of time—and golden opportunity.

**Henry W. Thomas.**

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OUR SPLENDID SERIAL.

# THE ALBERT GATE MYSTERY.

## *A Romance of To-day.*

By LOUIS TRACY.

*Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.*

### The Release.

"Now, who talks first?" Brett cried, once the door was fairly closed behind them.

"I do," burst forth Fairholme. "My story will not take long to tell, and if I do not get it off my chest, I shall simply explode."

"We must not have any more tragedies," said Brett, "so proceed."

"Well, thanks to your foresight, I found the two servants and your ex-policeman waiting for me on the platform at Charing Cross. As I only carried a handbag I had no trouble with the Customs, and we walked straight out of the station. In less than five minutes we were standing outside the building which contained the invalid lady's flat. Your agent told me that, so far as he knew, there were no other persons in the place except the tenant and her two servants, an elderly French or Italian married couple. Our collective wits could not devise a plausible pretext for gaining access to the lady, so I determined to settle the business in the brutal British fashion. We marched quietly up the stairs to the second storey, and your assistant pointed out the right door. There were only two flats on that landing, and the other one was apparently empty. Your man had made a somewhat important discovery since he wrote to you. This empty flat had been taken by the agent who acted for the parties opposite, and although the place was not tenanted, the landlord was, of course, satisfied, as the rent had been paid in advance. This seemed to indicate that the place was left vacant simply to prevent the others from being overlooked."

Brett marked his appreciation of Fairholme's sagacity by a nod, and the earl continued:

"I rang the bell and promptly put my ear to the keyhole. It seemed to me that a couple of doors were hastily closed, and then someone slowly approached. The outer door was opened and a man's head appeared. I could only see his face and a portion of his left shoulder, because the chain was on the door, and the opening was not more than eight or ten inches. Speaking in broken English he said—

"'Vat you vant?' His accent showed that he was a Frenchman.

"I answered in my best French, 'I wish to see madame, your mistress, at once.'

"'It is impossible,' he said in the same language, and simultaneously he tried to shut the door in my face. I shoved my foot against the jamb and prevented him. At the same instant my own servant and I—as, if there was to be trouble, I thought it best to keep the others out of it—applied our utmost force to the door and succeeded in snapping the chain. It might have been a tough job, as you know that to force a way through anything that yields slightly and yet holds fast is much more difficult than to smash a lock or a couple of bolts. Luckily the flats were jerry built, so the chain broke, and so suddenly that the Frenchman was pitched violently backwards. We nearly fell after him. The ex-policeman was a splendid chap. His first idea was to jump towards the switch of the electric lights and turn on every lamp in the place.

"I shouted, 'Talbot, are you there? It is I, Fairholme.'

"I got no answer, but a woman darted out of a room which proved to be the kitchen, screamed something which I could not catch, and handed a revolver to the Frenchman, who was just struggling to his feet. That was where my prize-fighting butler came in useful. Before you could say 'Wink' he gave the man an upper cut that settled him effectually for the next minute. Almost with the same movement he caught the woman a slap over the ear that upset her nerves considerably. She had a revolver in her hand too. It fell to the floor, and Smith, your servant, seized both weapons.

"The ex-policeman called out:

"'I do not think we are making any mistake, sir. They would not act after this manner if they were on the square.'

"I must say it seemed to me that so far it was we who had been acting in an extraordinary way, but there was no time to discuss the ethics of the case then. Whilst my butler and Smith took care of the couple, your assistant and I hastily examined three rooms. They were empty, save for a small quantity of furniture. The fourth door resisted our efforts, so, of course, we burst it open. And the first thing that met our eyes was poor old Jack lying on his back on the bed, and glaring at us in a way that made me think at first he was mad."

"I should think so," interrupted Talbot. "I would like to see your face if you were trussed up as I was—not able to speak a word—and a fiendish row going on in the passage outside."

"You were gagged," questioned Brett, "and your wrists and ankles were secured to the four corners of the bed, your limbs being distended in the form of an X?"

Fairholme glanced round admiringly. "Of course," he cried delightedly, "I knew you would guess it. That is the pleasant way these Turks have of securing their prisoners."

"It is an awfully uncomfortable one," said Talbot. "My joints are still stiff at the mere recollection of it. I have lain in that way, Mr. Brett, for countless hours. Occasionally the brutes would allow me to change my posture, but the moment anyone came to the door I was strapped up in an instant and a gag slipped into my mouth. What used to make me so furious was the knowledge that if only I got the chance of a second I could have broken that Frenchman's neck, and escaped, but he and his wife always took such precautions that I never had the liberty to do more than reach with some difficulty the food that they gave me. However, I must not interrupt."

"I really have not much more to say," went on Fairholme.

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"You may be sure it did not take me long to release Talbot, and what do you think his first words were when he slowly sat up in bed and tried if his legs would bend?"

"I cannot guess," said Brett.

"He said: 'Have they got the diamonds?'

"I answered 'Yes.'

"'But it was impossible,' he said. 'They could not have mastered all those policemen.'

"'But they did,' I replied and then and there, before he would budge an inch, he made me tell him the whole story. Just as I had ended we heard a scuffle in the passage. We went out, though Jack was hardly able to walk at first. It was Smith wrestling with the woman, who was a regular wild cat, and who would, even then, have done us any mischief in her power. There was nothing for it but to tie her hands behind her back, and then fasten her securely in a chair. After this was done we took council as to our next movements."

"Wait a little," said Brett. "How many rooms were there in the flat? You have accounted for four."

"I forgot," said Fairholme. "The place had six rooms. The small apartment in which Jack was confined was a sort of dressing room, and the bedroom beyond looked out into the well of the block of flats. They had carefully nailed the blinds of this dressing-room, so that not even a chance puff of wind could blow it aside and reveal its secret to anyone in the flats on the opposite storey or higher. The remaining room was empty. Your friend the policeman subsequently searched the place from top to toe, but he found nothing. The only document of any importance was an address on a card which he discovered in the Frenchman's pocket."

"Ah," said Brett, "what was that address?"

"Here it is."

The earl produced a small piece of pasteboard on which was scribbled, "Monsieur Jean Beaujolais, chez Monsieur Henri de Lisle, 41 Rue Bonnerie, Paris."

"That is important," said the barrister. "Why did you not wire it to me last night?"

"I had a reason," said the earl eagerly, "but that comes in with Jack's part of the story." And he turned towards Talbot, who, thus summoned on to the stage, began to explain matters.

### Jack Talbot's Story.

"I understand, Mr. Brett," he said, "that you are accurately acquainted with all that transpired until the moment when I entered the Albert Gate mansion on that remarkable night?"

"That is so," said Brett.

"Well, when Inspector Sharpe met me at the door on my arrival he told me that his Excellency Mehemet Ali, with three strange gentlemen and the junior members of the commission, awaited me in the dining-room. I went in and was surprised to find the three visitors, for during the preceding month not a single stranger had entered the house save a member of the Government and one or two important officials of the Foreign Office, who came with me out of sheer curiosity to see a collection of remarkable diamonds.

"The strangers bowed politely when I was introduced. Two of them spoke neither French nor English, but the third man spoke French fluently. He had, by the way, a somewhat peculiar accent, different from that to which I was accustomed in the Turks. It was softer, more sibilant, and impressed me as that of a man who was accustomed to speak Italian. He was a good-looking chap, about my height and build, and, were it not for his brown skin, one would not have regarded him as a Turk. One side of his face was deeply scarred with a sword-cut, but, if anything, this did not detract from his appearance, and it gave a manly aspect to an otherwise effeminate face."

Brett could not help smiling involuntarily.

"Are you sure it was a sword-cut?"

"It certainly looked like one."

"And his skin was very brown?"

"Oh, quite. Indeed it was a shade deeper than that of most Turks. I have seen very many of them. Although dark-featured they are often pallid enough in reality, and their deep-hued complexion is due more to their black hair and eyebrows and dark eyes than to the mere colour of the skin."

Brett smiled again.

"I think," he said, "I will show you the same gentleman in a somewhat different aspect. But proceed."

"The explanation given to me by Mehemet Ali was both extraordinary and disconcerting, especially at such a late hour. He told me that the three gentlemen to whom I had been introduced—I am sorry, by the way, that I cannot remember their names, as they were all Mohammeds, or Rasuls, or Ibrahims, and the dramatic events of the night subsequently drove them from my mind—had been sent post haste from Constantinople on a special mission. They had indeed only reached London that night, and they bore with them a special mandate signed by the Sultan himself, directing Mehemet Ali to hand over the diamonds to their charge, and to at once return with his assistants to Yildiz Kiosk.

"There could be no questioning the authenticity of the Sultan's instructions. The document was in his own handwriting, was indorsed with his private seal, and conveyed other distinguishing marks which rendered his Excellency assured on this important point. He told me that he was compelled to obey implicitly, and were it possible he would have started from London that night. This, however, was out of the question, but he had not lost a moment in sending for me, and acquainting me with his Majesty's wishes.

"You will readily perceive that the affair placed me in an awkward predicament. I was, so to speak, representing the British Government in the matter, and the Foreign Office had pledged itself, through our Ambassador at Constantinople, to undertake all the precautions for safeguarding the diamonds with which you are acquainted. It seemed to me that, notwithstanding the urgency of the Sultan's order, I should not be doing my duty to permit the transfer to be made in such an irregular manner. So I said quite plainly that the matter could not be settled that night. They must all wait until the morning, when I would have an opportunity of consulting my department, and Mehemet Ali, together with his aides, could leave for Constantinople by the evening train, after my superiors had been acquainted with the Sultan's wishes.

"Turks are difficult people to understand. It seemed to me that my decision gave some satisfaction to Mehemet Ali, who was undoubtedly very much upset by the queer manner in which he had been deposed from his important trust. At once an animated discussion took place."

"In French?" interrupted Brett.

"No; in Turkish."

"Did the gentleman with the sabre-cut on his face take any part therein?"

"Not in the least. He sat and smoked cigarettes in the most unconscious manner possible, leaving his two associates to carry on the conversation."

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As the barrister appeared to have no further question to ask at the moment Talbot continued:

"Several times Mehemet Ali appealed to me to change my mind and formally ratify the transfer at once. I was quite firm in my refusal, and did not hesitate to describe the Sultan's demands as ridiculous. I was rendered more determined, if anything, in this attitude by a growing certainty in my mind that his Excellency himself approved of my attitude. Ultimately, it seems, they hit upon a compromise. The whole party would remain together all night in a sort of dual control, and then the change of guardianship would take place next day in accordance with my views as to what was right and proper. I must admit I was intensely relieved when this decision was arrived at. Looking back now over the events of the night, I can perceive that from that moment the gang who effected the murders and the robbery had me in their power, for they had completely succeeded in allaying my suspicions, and I can only plead in extenuation of my short-sightedness that Mehemet Ali himself, and the other gentlemen with whom I had been acquainted during the past month, were willing accessories to the arrangement."

"I do not see," said Brett, "that you have the slightest cause to reproach yourself. You acted quite properly throughout, and I am sure that when all the facts are known your status at the Foreign Office will be improved rather than diminished by this incident."

The other man's face flushed with pleasure as he heard these words.

"Thank you," he replied simply. "I certainly took every precaution that suggested itself to me. Subsequently I was the victim of circumstances. The French-speaking Turk, as I have told you, took no part whatever in the negotiations, and when he became aware of the *modus operandi* determined upon——"

"By the way," said Brett, "how did he become aware of it?"

"Oh, Mehemet Ali told him in French."

"Didn't that strike you as curious?"

"Most certainly it did. But the scoundrel explained it afterwards by telling me that, although a Turkish subject, he had lived in Algiers and France since he was a child, and had quite forgotten his mother tongue. But he was employed in a confidential position in the Turkish Embassy at Paris, owing not only to family influence, but to his intimate acquaintance with the French language."

"Ah," said Brett, "Monsieur Henri Dubois has a ready wit."

### The Surprise.

"WHAT!" cried Edith, who naturally enough, was following each word with the utmost keenness, "do you already know his name?"

"Not only his name," replied Brett, "but his identity, Miss Talbot. You shall see him in another skin and without the sword-cut. It is possible, however, that before we meet, this distinguishing mark may be replaced by a fractured skull or a bullet wound."

Fairholme suddenly clenched his right fist and examined his knuckles, his unconscious action causing the others to laugh.

"Is he a Frenchman, then?" said Talbot.

"Unquestionably—a most modern product."

"And his name is Dubois?"

"Yes."

"All right. In future I will allude to him by his proper title. Well, Monsieur Dubois came over to me with the easy confidence of a man who was sure of himself.

"'This affair bores me,' he said. 'I see no reason why I, who am in no way concerned with the Sultan's collection of precious stones, should sit up all night keeping guard over them with these very earnest gentlemen here. I am going to my hotel. I have sent my portmanteau to the Carlton. Will you honour me by driving there and telling me something about your wonderful London as we go?'

"The man looked at me with a meaning in his eyes that conveyed quite plainly the intimation:


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"'We can talk quietly in the cab, and I can explain much to you that is at present hidden.' Unfortunately I fell in with his suggestions.

"We crossed the dining-room together. We were searched by the police in the hall, much to his apparent surprise, and then we drove off through St. George's Place.

"He at once aroused my curiosity by telling me of a wide-spread plot to dethrone the Sultan. An essential part of the conspiracy was to obtain possession of the diamonds before they had been cut, as they were an heirloom from the Prophet, and it would be a terrible thing in the eyes of the more fanatical section of the Mohammedans if they were tampered with in any way.

"This sounded reasonable enough, as the same story had been dinned in my ears for several weeks.

"He made out that for reasons of State the Sultan had decided to change the Minister Plenipotentiary charged with the secret Mission to London.

"Altogether he talked so candidly, and with such an air of treating the whole business as the bugbear of a timid monarch, that I readily believed him."

"At last we reached the Carlton. We got out and he paid the cabman, who drove off round the corner; then my new acquaintance explained to me that he placed no greater trust in his fellow-countrymen than did their ruler. Therefore he had led them to believe he was staying at that hotel, whereas he had in reality taken up his abode in the flat of a French family with whom he was acquainted. If I would come with him for a moment he promised to place me in possession of certain documents which would render easy my explanations to the Foreign Office next morning.

"I accompanied him without hesitation, secure in the knowledge that a strong force of police were guarding my charge at Albert Gate, both inside and outside the house. We went to the mansions where he said he lived. The place had a perfectly respectable exterior, and is situated, as you know, in a reputable thoroughfare. We ascended to the second floor, entered the flat, and were ushered by a middle-aged French-woman into a sort of sitting-room.

"Dubois turned to a writing-desk and unlocked a drawer.

"'Here are the documents I promised you, Mr. Talbot,' he said; but, to my amazement, he whipped out a revolver and held it within two feet of my breast.

"'If you move, or attempt to cry out, you are a dead man!' he cried.

"At the same instant a door behind me opened and some three or four persons entered. I was so furious at the trick that had been played upon me that I disregarded his threat and sprang at him, but he did not fire. Flinging the revolver behind him on the writing-table he closed with me. Before I well knew what had happened I was tied hand and foot, gagged, and placed helpless in a chair. A few minutes later, after a muttered consultation between my captors, I was taken to the room in which Fairholme found me, and I never left the place until nearly nine o'clock last night.

"It was a most ghastly experience. I would sooner die than go through it again.

"If ever I get within measurable distance of Monsieur Henri Dubois I promise you that I will repay him with interest some of the agony which he inflicted upon me. I never thought I should hate a man as I hate that Frenchman. I do not want to kill him. I want to torture him!"

This was the first sign that Talbot had given of the anger which filled his soul. For a moment no one spoke. Edith stifled a sob, and Sir Hubert Fitzjames broke the tension by swearing as vehemently as ever did the Army in Flanders.

"You have suffered," said Brett quietly, "but not in vain. It is only by the manner in which these blackguards treated you that we have obtained so much knowledge. Your capture was a necessary part of their scheme. I only wonder now that after you had served their purpose they did not kill you. It was not out of pity, believe me. The fact that you were spared confirms me in the opinion that the Albert Gate murders were a gigantic blunder, never contemplated by the expert criminals who planned the theft. But continue. What happened afterwards?"

Talbot almost summoned up a smile as he said:

"Really, the next thing was so grotesque that were not the whole business so serious you would be compelled to laugh at it."

## Talbot's Double.

"Looking back now to those first ghastly hours when I laid on the bed tied hand and foot, I find it difficult to recall any definite impressions. It would be absurd to say that I suffered, either mentally or physically. I was sunk in a sort of stupor of rage, and my bonds did not hurt me so long as I kept still. Curiously enough, my thoughts were somewhat altruistic. Instead of speculating upon my own fate I rather wondered what would be the outcome of the whole mysterious business. I could not bring myself to believe that, cleverly as the rogues had outwitted me, they would be able to similarly 'dupe' a strong body of Metropolitan police, not to mention Mehemet Ali and his assistants.

"At last I fell asleep, dozing fitfully at first, but finally giving way to the deep slumber of exhaustion.

"I was awakened by someone shaking me, though not roughly. It took me some time to recover my scattered senses, and at first I was almost unable to move, owing to the constrained position of my limbs. As well as I could judge it was not yet daylight, for the electric lamps were turned on, and I subsequently found that such rays of natural light as penetrated into my room during the day did not arrive for a considerable time.

"Thenceforth, of course, my sole method of judging the progress of time was by the alternation of meals and the difference of light between day and night.

"Someone assisted me to assume a sitting posture, the cords attached to my wrists were relaxed, and I was firmly held by two men—one a Turk whom I had not seen before, the other the Frenchman whom you found in the flat.

"At the foot of the bed were standing Dubois and a closely-veiled female—a young woman, as well as I could judge, and a person of tall and elegant stature, who, it would appear, spoke only French.

"Dubois addressed me calmly. 'I hope,' he said, 'you are in a better temper, my dear Talbot?'

"'It does not appear to me that the state of my temper is of any material significance,' I answered.

"'No,' he replied nonchalantly. 'The game is in my hands, and will probably remain there for a considerable period. But I do not wish to be unkind. You have, I am given to understand, a highly respectable uncle and a very charming sister, who will no doubt suffer much perturbation owing to your mysterious disappearance. Now, you may not think it, but I am a very humane sort of fellow. Consequently, I am quite agreeable that you should write them a brief note, omitting, of course, all superfluous information such as dates, addresses, and other embarrassing facts, but simply telling them that you are well. I will guarantee its safe delivery.'

"Naturally, I jumped at the offer. The veiled lady supplied

(*Continued on page* 190.)

## The Cure of Deafness After Specialists Fail.

In the December "Supplement" to the "Journal for the Deaf," the Editor notes a case of deafness of many years' duration, pronounced incurable by one Aurist, and discharged uncured by a celebrated London Hospital after an operation and eight months' treatment had failed. In face of such a failure it is surprising to find a perfect cure by the Drouet Method, vouched for as follows by the patient, Mr. T. De Courcey Rayner, of 128 High Street, West Norwood, London, S.E.:—"I am grateful to be able to say that my hearing seems to be all right now, as I can hear my watch quite distinctly from the other side of the room." Those who wish to read the full details of this case, as well as a large number of similar instances, can obtain a free copy of the "Supplement" and of "The Journal for the Deaf" by addressing the Secretary, Drouet Institute, 10 Marble Arch, London, W. The "Journal" also contains a Special Report Form by means of which anyone can obtain free advice as to the treatment of Deafness, and Ear, Nose and Throat diseases. The Editor, however, advises patients, whenever possible, to attend the Institute for a personal examination during the Consultation hours, weekday mornings, 10 to 12, afternoons, 2 to 4. For personal consultations a fee of 5s is charged.


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me with a sheet of note-paper and an envelope, and I scribbled the unfortunate letter which was subsequently posted in Paris and caused such a sensation. I had only one hand at liberty, so Dubois politely offered to seal the envelope for me, first, however, reading carefully what I had written.

"'That is quite correct,' he said; 'it will relieve their feelings and prove at the same time highly serviceable to me, as the letter will be posted in Paris and not in London. You see, my dear Talbot, how readily you fall in with my plans. You are as putty in my hands. Now, I suppose, being a brave Englishman, you would sooner have died than written this letter if you had guessed it would prove of material assistance to me?'

"I fear I used some very bad language to Dubois, notwithstanding the presence of the lady, but he paid little heed to me, and the pair at once undertook the most curious proceedings I have ever witnessed.

"They had before them a table set out with all sorts of paint, paste, and powders, such as one might expect to find in an actor's dressing-room.

"Seating himself astride a chair so that the light fell full upon his face, Dubois submitted himself to the skilful hands of the woman, who forthwith began to make him up in an exact resemblance to me. The right side of his face was towards me, but when, in obedience to her requirements, he turned somewhat, I noticed to my astonishment that the scar which I have mentioned had completely disappeared, and then it dawned upon me that his Turkish complexion had also vanished, leaving him a particularly white-skinned Frenchman, with a high colour.

"Ah," said Brett, leaning back in his chair and attentively surveying the ceiling.

"You must remember," went on Talbot, "that my wits were somewhat confused by the extraordinary circumstances of the hour. Having been so suddenly awakened from a sound sleep, and subsequently annoyed by the incident of the letter, it took me some moments to recognise these discrepancies in his appearance. At first, so to speak, I knew him immediately as Dubois, but the more I looked at him the less confident I would have been were it not that his voice and manner supplied unerring indications of his identity.

"The lady proceeded with her work in the most business-like fashion, and to my intense amazement he quickly assumed a marked resemblance to myself. Not such, perhaps, as would bear close scrutiny, but rather the effect attained by a skilful artist in a rapid sketch, or caught by a fleeting glance whilst passing a mirror.

"'What is the game now?' I cried, when the true nature of their purpose dawned upon me.

"'Oh, just the same,' replied Dubois, grinning, 'I merely wish to puzzle the thick-headed brains of you Englishmen a little more. That is all.'

"'Halloa!' I cried, 'you understand English?'

"'Yes,' he answered coolly. 'It is frequently necessary in my business.'

"'Well,' I said, 'there can be no doubt that you are an accomplished villain. What you intend to achieve by masquerading in this fashion I utterly fail to understand. You can never be such a fool as to think that you will be able to gain admittance to Albert Gate by impersonating me. Were you even to succeed you would still be as far off as ever from securing your booty, which, I suppose, is the Imperial diamond and its companions.'

"'Really,' he said, with a sneer, 'I thought that you, Mr. Talbot, were endowed with a little more intelligence than the average. *Pardon*, Mignon, for a moment.'

"He rose from his chair, unfastened a case which he took from the breast-pocket of his overcoat, and showed me the diamonds which had been the object of so much care and solicitude on my part during many weeks.

"'You see,' he continued, seating himself again, whilst the lady resumed her task without a word, 'the business has been satisfactorily accomplished, Mr. Talbot. The diamonds are here; so are you. Unfortunately his Excellency and the secretaries are with the Prophet. You will, I am sure, express my regrets to the police, to the Foreign Office, and to all concerned, that the Sultan's commissionaires should have been so unceremoniously dispatched to Paradise. It was not my fault, believe me, nor was it altogether necessary. I am in no way responsible for the bungling measures adopted by my Turkish assistants. You see, in Constantinople they are accustomed to these drastic means of settling disputes.'

"He rattled on so pleasantly that I hardly grasped the true significance of his words, so I replied with almost equal flippancy:

"'I will be most pleased to convey your regrets to the proper authorities. May I ask when I shall be at liberty to do so?'

"'Ah,' he said, 'there you puzzle even my intelligence. It will certainly be days, it may be weeks, before you can communicate with your friends.'"

*(Another instalment next week.)*

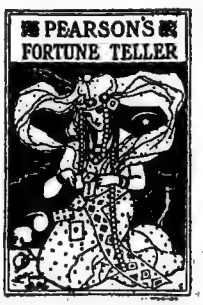
---

She: "Anything that is worth winning is worth working for." He: "Yes, but the question is, will your father thaw or will I have to keep on working for you after I've won you?"

He: "You have only to command me. I will do anything you say." She: "Anything?" He: "Yes, I'll drive over that precipice into the river if you bid me." She: "Then stop, please, and let me get out."

"That professor says that Shakespeare's women are not intellectual." "Of course not. Look at Ophelia, going out in the woods and picking flowers when she might have made Hamlet buy them for her."

"Gertrude, I've brought you home two bushels of artificial violets." "Two bushels! Have you lost your mind?" "No, but I heard you say you wished you had as many on your hat as that girl next door."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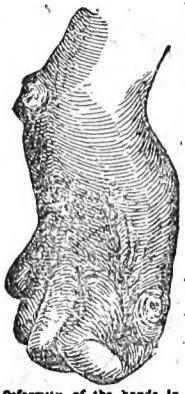

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**Conducted by CYNTHIA.**

*[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.*]*

### *Taking His Arm.*

"Ought a girl to take her lover's arm without waiting for him to initiate the process?" asks "Dora," who has been walking out with a young man for six months, but he has never once taken her arm. Would it be forward if she took his arm without waiting for an overture from him?

* * * *

I think a man who has been walking with a girl on terms of intimacy for six months and has never offered her his arm must be either very lukewarm or very shy. "Dora" knows which defect it is in his case. If I were "Dora" I should certainly take his arm, and teach him in whatever other way she may like, the lesser arts of love-making, which are not to be neglected.

### *A Girl Above Him.*

"Charlie" paid attentions while on his holidays to a lady much his superior in position. Despairing of ever being able to offer her marriage, he has discontinued the attentions. But all the time he believes she is very fond of him and wonders why he has turned cool.

* * * *

It is quite right of "Charlie" not to pursue an attachment which cannot have a satisfactory result to both parties. But he should not allow the girl to suspect him of infidelity. It would be better to tell her the whole circumstances, and leave it to her to instruct him in his conduct. If she is in a good position, perhaps she will have some means of helping "Charlie" to improve his own, and thereby pave the way for a union some time or another.

### *Cure For Shyness.*

"Lena" tells me she suffers very much from shyness and self-consciousness towards other people. This means that she does not get the attention she would like from the opposite sex. What is the best cure for this?

* * * *

No doubt it is a form of disease, brought about by a disordered nervous state. A chat with your doctor might put you in the way of getting over the habit, perhaps, better than my advice. Probably shyness and self-consciousness arise because you are in the habit of thinking too much about yourself. Try to forget your personality. This you can do by interesting yourself in other things.

* * * *

Talk to people with a view of gaining their confidence. Become a good listener to other people's conversation. Read as many books as you can, and think over them. Take up some hobby, whether it be cooking, singing, playing the piano, or sketching, to keep your mind occupied. Then you will find that self-consciousness of yours gradually disappearing, because you will realise after all what an unimportant thing self is beside the really great and interesting matters of life.

### *The Worried Husband.*

"My husband worries a good deal over business," writes "Martha." "But often I want his advice on home matters. Ought I to tell him of the little troubles that take place in the house or should I keep them to myself?"

* * * *

If your husband is worried over business, certainly he does not want on returning home to begin again over less important matters. If you can keep your own counsel in domestic matters, by all means do so. Spare him as much small trouble as you can, or his health will break down, which would perhaps be unfortunate for you.

### *Chance Acquaintances.*

"Effie" met a young man while out for a walk. They got into conversation, and he asked if he might call on her and take her out again. She did not know anything about the man. Do I advise her to communicate with him?

* * * *

I suppose, "Effie," you were able to judge from the man's manner and appearance whether or not he seemed genuine. Of course only too many of these chance meetings turn out to be the reverse. I should not advise you to communicate with him until he gives you satisfactory proofs of his position and hints as to his intentions.

### *"How D' You Do?"*

"When any one says 'How d' you do?' to me at a party, how is it correct to answer," asks "Arthur," who is only seventeen, and therefore inexperienced in social customs. "Should I say 'Very well, thank you,' or reply with another 'How d' you do??"

* * * *

Do anything except appear formal. If the person who greets you is much older, reply "Quite well, thank you," taking the greeting as extended to you in the light of a favour. If it is merely a chance acquaintance, of about your own age, answer the inquiry as you like. But boys usually have an instinctive way of getting through such little complications, and that way is generally the best liked socially.

### *Cousins and Kissing.*

"W. J." writes me a pathetic letter. He is eighteen, and is blessed with an over-supply of female cousins and aunts. At one house he visits he has no fewer than six of the former, whose ages range from six to twenty-seven. "Ought I," he asks, "to kiss these?"

* * * *

Poor "W. J.!" Really, I think I should draw the line at all except those between seventeen and thirty. A young fellow cannot really be expected even by cousins to kiss on such a large scale. There is no rule compelling you to kiss your cousins. Most men observe the practice or otherwise, just according to the nature of the cousins. I advise you to do the same.

### *A Tea-Shop Problem.*

"Ettie" meets a young man friend at a tea shop several nights a week. He usually comes over and joins her. When they go out he insists on paying for her refreshment. Ought she to allow him to do so?

* * * *

No, certainly not. It is neither fair to him nor to yourself. If he asks you to have tea with him, of course, he must pay, but when your meeting is quite casual, it is no affair of his. Next time he offers to, stand on your dignity, and say that you will be so very annoyed if he insists on paying your bill. That will at once put the matter right.

Cynthia

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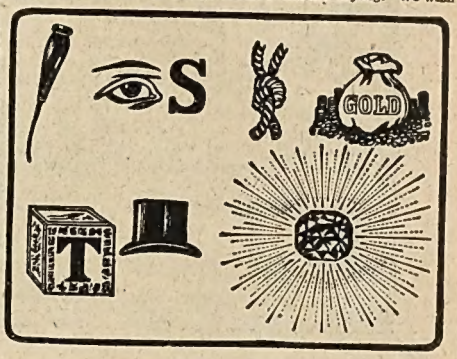
Now, sometimes our contests seem very simple, and perhaps the one below may appear so, but on this point we wish to put you on your guard. Don't say "What a fool that man is. Does he take his readers for children?" No, we do not, but still you are apt to make a mistake and "jump at conclusions." What we want you to do is to solve this rebus correctly; take your time about it, even consult authorities, or consult your friends, and then if you think you are right post your answer. Probably very few will send in the right solution. Remember there is only one correct answer—the original quotation, but the prizes are worth the effort. Find the words and arrange them correctly, and remember that some of the most brilliant men of letters living have on examining this rebus given an incorrect answer

We shall give **£75 in Cash** for the correct reading of this rebus which represents a learned saying. We wish you to understand that **there is no trick or catch** about this puzzle for it is a veritable quotation from a famous author who died in the second decade of the 17th Century, and one that has been often repeated. If you cannot find and arrange the six words in this rebus correctly, but only find five, you will participate in a Second Prize of **£50.** Now here are **£125** being given in two prizes alone, and someone is going to win the money. Is it not worth a trial? There is only one easy condition, which by the way does not involve your selling anything or putting your hand in your pocket for a penny. About this we will write you on receiving your solution.




An envelope containing the correct answer has been sealed and deposited with our bankers, and will not be opened until after the close of the contest. In the event of more than one correct solution, we shall appoint a committee of three from among the contestants to award the cash *pro rata*. The expenses of the committee will be paid to London, and **£1 per day** allowed to each while away from home. You may be asked but not compelled to act as one of the committee.

In connection with this contest we are going to give away other Cash prizes, namely **Ten Prizes of £10, Twenty of £5, and Seventy-five Prizes of £1**, the conditions with regard to which will be duly sent. You have the opportunity to secure any of the above-mentioned cash prizes without cost to yourself, and we shall send you when you answer this, the names of winners in past contests, a list too long for publication here! Every promise in this advertisement will be scrupulously carried out, and all will be treated with even-handed justice. Send your answer at once, **with two stamps** for postage, copy of one of our publications, testimonials, etc. If you are not satisfied with the contest you can demand and will receive the return of even this 2d., as well as the postage spent in answering this advertisement, for it is well known that we always follow the most straightforward methods. If you wish you can send 6d., when, besides the journal, conditions, etc., we will forward a charming gift that is the rage of London, and will surprise and please you. Do not delay, as the day of closing will soon be announced. Address:

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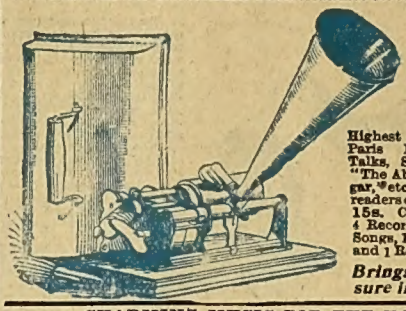

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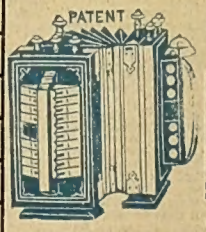


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